Stoke-on-Trent College

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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Address:	Cauldon Campus Stoke Road Shelton Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire ST4 2DG

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Stoke-on-Trent College was inspected in October 2019. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in tackling the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Stoke-on-Trent College is a medium-sized general further education college based in two campuses: Cauldon campus and Burslem campus. At the time of inspection, 1,819 learners were on education programmes for young people and 2,552 learners were on adult learning programmes, with 427 learners enrolled on apprenticeships. Of these, 74% of learners were on standards-based programmes, with the remaining 26% enrolled on framework-based apprenticeships. Exactly 46 learners were in receipt of high-needs funding. A further 24 learners were enrolled on traineeships. Leaders offer courses in most subject areas, the largest being in English for speakers of other languages, health and social care, business, engineering, and construction. Courses are offered from level 1 to level 4, with around two-thirds of the learners on study programmes at level 3 and below. The college works with one subcontractor for the teaching of courses in performing arts.

Themes

What steps have leaders and managers taken to improve the quality of apprenticeship provision?   Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have created a new 'apprenticeship hub'. New staff have been appointed to oversee this area. New college management groups have been set up to agree the actions they want to take to improve the quality of apprentices. These groups meet frequently and rigorously review the action taken to date. As a result, senior leaders within apprenticeships have a clear oversight over all the apprenticeship provision offered at the college. Newly appointed staff have clear and accurate plans in place to improve the quality of apprenticeship provision.

Senior leaders have started to take action to improve the quality of apprenticeships. They have reviewed the range of apprenticeships that the college offers. The college no longer offers apprenticeships to new learners in areas such as warehousing. Senior leaders are now focusing on areas of key priority within the local area, such as construction and engineering. Consequently, leaders are now focusing more sharply on developing the teaching skills of teachers within key sector areas.

Teachers and skills coaches now provide apprentices with more useful feedback. The feedback that they provide makes it clear what apprentices need to do to improve the standard of their work. For example, apprentices in bricklaying can describe how they are improving their practical skills in building a wall as a result of the feedback they receive. Apprentices now have a much clearer understanding of what they will need to do for their final assessment. Teachers introduce this topic to new apprentices early in their programme.

Leaders and teachers have reviewed the order in which they teach new content to apprentices. They make sure that apprentices can apply the new practical skills they develop in their job role. As a result, apprentices are provided with increased opportunity to revisit and develop fluency in their practical skills. Apprentices told inspectors how they are given increased responsibilities in their job role as a result of developing new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Senior leaders recognise that they need to review the order in which they teach new learning to apprentices in other sector areas.

What steps have teachers taken to ensure that they order the content of the curriculum in a way that builds learners' knowledge, skills, and behaviours over time?　　　**Reasonable progress**

In business, senior leaders have revisited the way in which they order new learning. For example, in response to the pandemic, leaders brought forward a unit on 'responding to change in business', to reflect what was happening in the world of business. Topics on 'working with others' and 'practical customer service skills' were moved to later in the programme, when learners returned to face-to-face teaching. As a result, learners are developing new knowledge, skills and behaviours which are better preparing them for their next steps.

Senior leaders have strengthened their approach to curriculum planning. Leaders now use information from local and national sources to identify the key knowledge, skills and behaviours learners need to develop. In response to this, leaders have added additional content into the curriculum in areas such as business law. Consequently, learners now have a greater understanding of the range of laws and regulations in which businesses have to operate.

Teachers have revisited how and when they assess learners. They now make sure that learners have been taught all the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need before being assessed. For example, learners are taught and then practise their presentation skills before being asked to apply this by planning and hosting an event.

Leaders and teachers now focus on making sure learners have more frequent opportunities to revisit and recall their learning. Teachers use quizzes and a range of online learning tools within lessons to check the progress that learners are making in building their knowledge. However, in a few cases, teachers focus too much on

whether learners have completed tasks, rather than focusing on what learners now know and can remember.

Learners comment positively on the support they receive from teachers. For example, learners can access additional lessons where needed. Teachers also offer additional one-to-one and small-group sessions to learners.

To what extent have senior leaders improved the quality of GCSE mathematics provision, so that learners are making the progress of which they are capable from their starting points? **Significant progress**

Senior leaders have invested significantly in resources to improve the quality of GCSE mathematics provision. Leaders and teachers have been involved in a number of projects to improve the quality of teaching within GCSE mathematics.

Leaders and teachers have developed a new approach to how they teach. Teachers focus on supporting learners to recall learning regularly, and to practise applying new learning by solving mathematical problems. As a result, learners have improved their knowledge in areas such as fractions. They are now able to apply new learning and solve more complex mathematical problems that involve improper fractions.

Leaders have invested in a range of new online learning resources. Teachers use these resources very well to track the progress that learners are making. Where teachers identify gaps in learners' knowledge and skills, they revisit this content in subsequent lessons. Where needed, teachers offer additional one-to-one support to learners. Through the catch-up tuition fund, learners can access this support as part of their timetable.

Teachers have access to a range of useful training to help improve their teaching. For example, leaders and teachers have developed new partnerships with other local providers. Teachers share best practice and discuss how best to use the new resources that they have access to. Teachers value the opportunity to do this.

Senior leaders have strengthened their approach to monitoring learners' attendance at GCSE mathematics lessons. Mathematics teachers now work more closely with vocational tutors to identify those learners who are not attending. Teachers then work collaboratively to put in place timely interventions. As a result, most learners improve their attendance where it falls below expectations.

Teachers now have a more rigorous approach to identifying what learners know and need to know when they start their course. Teachers use this information to place learners in specific groups. Teachers then focus their teaching on the key mathematical knowledge and skills that learners need to develop. Consequently, learners are making more rapid progress from their starting points.

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