

bemix

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

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Name of lead inspector: Peter Cox, Her Majesty's Inspector

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Type of provider: Independent specialist college

Address: Roper Road
Canterbury
CT2 7ER

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Inspectors last visited bemix in March 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 addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Formerly known as Skillnet Group, bemix began operating in 2001 as a private training provider and successfully registered as an independent specialist college in 2017. Based in Kent, bemix supports young people with autism spectrum disorder and/or learning difficulties to learn skills and gain qualifications needed for employment and life. At the last full inspection in March 2019, inspectors judged provision to require improvement.

At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 68 learners, of which 12 were on preparation for employment courses, 33 were on supported internship courses, and 23 were returning to complete their work placements that had been interrupted by the pandemic.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in establishing governance that provides support and effective challenge to leaders to improve the quality of education for learners?

Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, leaders have established a highly experienced, qualified, and ambitious board of governors. Governors use their experience to support and challenge leaders to improve the quality of education effectively.

Leaders ensure that governors are well informed about the quality of teaching. They provide useful information and opportunities to help governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. For example, governors attend staff meetings and observe discussions so that they develop their knowledge of what teachers do. As a consequence, governors now have detailed information about the quality of education, which informs discussions with senior leaders.

Governors work closely with leaders to support the strategic development of education. For example, leaders involved governors in the design of the preparation for employment course to ensure it meets employers' business needs. As a result, governors have a secure knowledge of provision and are keenly involved in monitoring its impact.

Governors recognise the need to improve the detail of information they receive about the quality of teaching, in order to better support this area.

How much progress have leaders made in developing quality assurance systems so that they identify weaknesses in the provision and can swiftly put in place interventions that lead to improvements?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and governors have rightly focused on improving quality assurance as a result of the previous inspection. They have appropriate quality assurance systems and personnel in place. Consequently, leaders have a good understanding of the strengths of provision. They use sensible plans to resolve areas of weakness. For example, they now review learners' work carefully to better understand the quality of education and learners' progress. They monitor their actions for improvement closely.

Since the last inspection, leaders have introduced measures to improve learners' participation in learning. For example, managers now regularly monitor learners' attendance. This enables staff to intervene swiftly to help learners continue in learning and make progress in their work placements.

Leaders and managers have improved their understanding of the quality of teaching. They use this information well to inform staff training. For example, managers gave additional training to teaching assistants, so that they now support teaching more effectively. As a result of improved quality assurance, staff are becoming more confident and competent teachers.

As a result of the pandemic, leaders have only recently been able to appoint a highly experienced head of education. The head of education has introduced a sensible and appropriate quality assurance cycle. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these actions.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in implementing effective pre-enrolment selection of candidates to ensure that they can proceed into their work placements at the earliest opportunity?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have improved the quality of information they receive about potential learners. They have recruited a manager to oversee this. Staff now receive consistent and detailed information about the needs of new learners. They use this improved information to organise work placements successfully.

Staff use a good range of information to identify learners' suitability for courses and work placements. For example, staff use taster days for learners to experience work and to determine the appropriateness of the work placement. As a result of these

taster days, staff now have a greater understanding of learners' needs and so they organise more appropriate placements.

Leaders have improved communication between managers and job coaches. As a result, where learners may be struggling on placement, leaders can quickly support them to continue learning and develop new skills.

Leaders have recognised correctly that some learners were not yet ready for work placement, lacking the requisite skills and confidence needed for supported internships. In response, leaders have successfully introduced a preparation for employment course to be completed prior to internship. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this new course.

How well do teachers use learners' starting points to plan and implement a curriculum that supports learners to develop and apply new knowledge and skills in English and mathematics?

Reasonable progress

Staff have recently introduced new systems to help them understand learners' starting points in English and mathematics. Staff use this information to successfully plan learning and support workplace preparation. For example, teachers help learners to tell the time, and job coaches support learners to apply this to filling in timesheets.

Staff use frequent assessment to set clear targets for learners and support staff. They review these targets often to support learners to make progress. Staff set appropriate targets for English and mathematics that are well aligned to learners' individual work placements. For example, learners within administration work settings are given targets to improve their formal writing. As a result, learners develop the essential English and mathematics skills they need for their placement.

Staff monitor learners' progress closely through the recent introduction of individual development plans. Staff use this detailed information to plan and provide learning and support. These match carefully to learners' education, health and care plans. Consequently, staff are improving their understanding of learners' needs, goals and aspirations.

Learners benefit from additional support to improve their English and mathematics skills. For example, staff give learners tailored worksheets to take home to develop mathematics skills. As a result, learners are better able to apply mathematics to real-life situations such as handling money.

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