

# City of Bristol College

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

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**Unique reference number:** 131094

**Name of lead inspector:** Ian Higgins, Her Majesty's Inspector

**Inspection dates:** 1 and 2 December 2021

**Type of provider:** General further education college

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

City of Bristol College was inspected in November 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.

City of Bristol College is a large college with four substantial campuses across Bristol. These are based in the city centre, the north and the south of the city. At the time of the visit, 3,114 students were enrolled on study programmes. The vast majority of learners were enrolled on programmes at levels 1 and 2. A minority of students are enrolled on study programmes at levels 3 and 4. Around 740 learners are enrolled on apprenticeships, with the most popular sector areas being engineering and manufacturing technologies, and business administration and law. The vast majority of apprentices are enrolled at levels 2 and 3, with a small minority of apprentices at levels 4 and 5. Some 80% of apprentices are on standards-based apprenticeships, with the remainder on frameworks. The college offers provision for 706 learners who have high needs. Exactly 18 learners aged 14 to 16 access part-time provision within the college. In addition, 381 learners are studying professional and vocational higher education programmes in the University Centre. The college works with eight subcontractors.

### Themes

**What progress have leaders made in ensuring that learners and apprentices develop the mathematical skills they need to support their next steps, including in subcontracted provision?**

**Reasonable progress**

Senior leaders have invested additional resources into functional skills mathematics provision. Learners now benefit from additional teaching time and a range of useful online resources. Teachers use these resources well to set additional learning. Leaders have prioritised the timetabling of functional skills mathematics. As a result, attendance at functional skills classes is improving, and learners are in receipt of more in-class teaching. Learners are making more rapid progress. However, for apprentices studying functional skills mathematics, leaders do not prioritise this early enough in the apprenticeship. Apprentices are not making sufficiently rapid progress from their starting points.

Senior leaders have improved the communication between the functional skills mathematics area and wider curriculum areas. Lecturers communicate more

frequently and work together to plan learning. As a result, learners have additional time to revisit new concepts they have learned. Learners are quickly developing new knowledge and skills.

Senior leaders and lecturers identify more quickly those learners who require additional support. Where this need is identified, leaders act quickly to put appropriate support arrangements in place. Learners rightly comment positively on the additional support they receive through the 'study plus' arrangements. Learners benefit from further teaching and support. Learners with additional support needs quickly develop new knowledge and skills.

Senior leaders and lecturers have adapted the methods they use to find out what learners know when they first start their course. Lecturers use project work well through asking learners to design a workstation using, and applying, mathematics practically. Learners enjoy this work and develop more positive attitudes towards learning mathematics. However, this project work does not provide sufficient information for lecturers to be clear on the gaps in learners' knowledge. As a result, lecturers do not always tackle key gaps in learners' knowledge early enough. Where this is the case, this slows down the progress that learners make.

Learners in receipt of functional skills mathematics provision through subcontractors also benefit from improvements in the quality of education. Lecturers within subcontracted provision benefit from useful training and development which improves their craft of teaching. As a result, learners develop new knowledge and skills. For example, they perform calculations with division more accurately.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in supporting teachers to develop the skills to ensure that teaching and learning are of high quality, including where teaching is online? Reasonable progress**

Leaders have invested heavily in training for staff. Lecturers receive targeted training and support from learning coaches. A new peer-to-peer development programme is now in place. Lecturers feel more empowered to try out new teaching strategies. For example, lecturers in functional skills mathematics complete training on managing challenging behaviour. Consequently, they are more confident in managing poor student behaviour. They set clear expectations for students at the start of all lessons. The behaviour of students in mathematics sessions has improved as a result.

Leaders provide helpful training for staff to support online teaching. For example, lecturers in catering receive helpful training to allow the teaching and assessment of practical activity to continue when teaching is online. Lecturers improved their use of video and software, which they use very well to develop learners' practical skills. Lecturers provide frequent and useful feedback on practical work. Learners improve their standard of work as a result.

Leaders and learning coaches provide strong support for new lecturers. New lecturers receive weekly one-to-one meetings with their line managers and learning coaches. Learning coaches set regular actions for new lecturers, which are reviewed in a timely way. Consequently, new lecturers are developing their teaching skills.

Leaders have recently introduced a new set of teaching and learning principles. Learning walks to check the impact of such changes are frequent. However, it is too early to judge the impact of such changes on the improvements that have been made to teaching. In a few cases, those conducting learning walks focus too much on what teachers do, rather than on the impact teaching has on what learners remember and can now do.

**What steps have leaders and managers taken to improve the quality of education for learners completing programmes in level 3 business studies? Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have revisited the management arrangements for the business studies department. There is now greater accountability from new leaders to improve the standard of teaching. Lecturers within business studies receive targeted training and development. Lecturers now regularly and frequently check learning in class through quizzes and personal reflections. However, where gaps in learning are identified, lecturers do not routinely use this information well enough to plan learning so that all learners make expected or better progress.

Managers and lecturers now have high expectations of students. They promote the achievement of high grades. Learners are more ambitious and aspire to work towards high grades. However, in a minority of cases, lecturers' feedback is not clear in telling students what they need to do to improve their standard of work. Where this happens, students are not clear on how to improve their work over time.

Managers and lecturers have revisited the order in which they teach new content to learners. Lecturers now teach effective project working at the beginning. As a result, learners benefit from developing these skills early in their programme, so that they can apply them more fluently later in the course when completing a formal project. However, managers and lecturers have not ensured that learners develop the information and communication technology skills they need early enough in their programmes. As a result, learners are asked to complete work using software which they do not have the skills to use sufficiently well.

Managers and lecturers have improved how well they track the progress that students make. A new 'on track and off track' system is in place. Lecturers use this process to track closely the progress students make against their curricular goals. Where learners are not progressing as rapidly as they should, managers and lecturers put timely interventions in place to make sure learners catch up.

**What steps have leaders and managers taken to improve the quality of teaching and training for apprentices enrolled within building and construction, so that apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to support their next steps?      Insufficient progress**

Leaders have been too slow to bring about the required improvements within apprenticeships. A minority of teachers do not have the relevant qualifications or necessary skills to ensure that teaching is of high quality. Managers have recently introduced a new coaching process to support teachers within apprenticeships to improve their teaching skills. However, the impact of such changes cannot yet be seen.

Managers and lecturers do not make clear at the beginning of apprenticeships what apprentices will learn. They do not identify clearly enough what apprentices already know and need to know. As a result, all apprentices undertake the same programme of learning. Lecturers do not have or use sufficient information to plan learning so that apprentices develop the knowledge and skills they need most urgently within their relevant job roles.

Although apprentices do learn some new knowledge, such as how to hang a new door, managers and lecturers do not plan well enough with employers so that apprentices can then practise their new knowledge and apply it within the workplace. Assessors do not plan on- and off-the-job learning. Apprentices do not get frequent enough opportunity to apply new knowledge and develop new skills in the workplace. Apprentices make slow progress as a result.

Assessors do not track sufficiently well the progress apprentices are making in developing new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Assessors do not complete frequent enough reviews with apprentices. Employers are not regularly involved in the reviews that do take place between assessors and apprentices. As a result, apprentices are not clear on what they need to do to improve the standard of their work.

Too many apprentices experience frequent changes of assessors. Too many apprentices receive a disjointed learning experience. Apprentices are not clear on what they have already learned, and what they are moving on to next.

**How effectively are governors scrutinising and challenging information provided by senior leaders to assure themselves that learners and apprentices receive high-quality education and training and are safe?**

**Reasonable progress**

Governors have been more successful in supporting the improvement of the teaching of safeguarding topics than they have in assuring a consistent high quality of teaching and learning.

Governors have taken a range of steps so that they can provide useful challenge and scrutiny of the action leaders are taking to improve the quality of education. For example, senior leaders – with the support of governors – set up a number of ‘task-and-finish’ groups. Leaders and governors identified a set of six key areas that required improvement from the previous inspection. In some cases, leaders and governors have been successful in bringing about the required improvements. For example, governors scrutinised information on learners’ attendance to support senior leaders to tackle this. Students’ attendance has improved as a result. However, in a few areas, such as apprenticeships, senior leaders and governors have not been successful in bringing about the rapid improvements needed.

Governors have challenged senior leaders to provide them with clearer information on the performance of different departments. For example, governors now receive information from ‘focused curriculum reviews’ that managers undertake in different departmental areas. Governors use this information thoroughly to scrutinise the improvements made. Where required, they challenge senior leaders and managers to make further improvements. However, governors and leaders do not focus sufficiently well on the impact of teaching on learning. They focus too narrowly on predicted and actual achievement of qualifications, rather than on the impact of teaching on students’ development of new knowledge, skills and behaviours over time.

Governors receive targeted and useful information on safeguarding within the college. Governors have in place a link governor with specific responsibilities for safeguarding. Governors receive frequent and timely information on safeguarding. For example, they receive ‘executive summaries’ from leaders on trends in the type of safeguarding concerns within the college. Governors use this information skilfully. They challenge senior leaders to revisit and provide assurance that the information learners receive on the localised risks is accurate, up to date and impactful. As a result, senior leaders and those with specific responsibilities around safeguarding frequently revisit the content they teach within tutorials. Consequently, learners benefit from a range of useful content and from guest speakers in areas such as risks associated with harmful sexual behaviours, and knife crime.

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