

Morley College Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Jane Hughes, Her Majesty's Inspector

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Morley College Limited, trading as Morley College London, is one of nine specialist designated adult education colleges in England. It is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The college merged with Kensington and Chelsea College in February 2020 and now has three main sites in Waterloo, North Kensington and Chelsea. The college has satellite centres in Stockwell and Rotherhithe.

Morley College London currently has approximately 8,800 students, of whom the vast majority are adults. The college specialises in visual and performing arts, culture and applied sciences at levels 1 to 6. A small number of students are on higher education programmes. The college also offers programmes in foundation skills, access to higher education and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

This monitoring visit took place to evaluate the progress that governors, leaders and staff have made to establish a shared vision and to deal with weaknesses in the quality of education that existed at the former Kensington and Chelsea College prior to the merger.

Themes

What progress have leaders, managers and governors made in merging Morley College and Kensington and Chelsea College, and to establish a shared vision and create an effective management structure?

Significant progress

Since the merger, leaders and governors have very quickly established clear goals and a shared vision for the college. They have completed this successfully while dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders have communicated this information very clearly to staff. Staff across the college understand very well how they contribute towards achieving the goals while maintaining the local identities and brands of each of the different centres. They also support leaders' vision to improve social inclusion in the communities the college serves.

Leaders have strengthened the governing body with members from the local communities. This helps them gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues and needs of local people. Leaders have adapted the curriculum at the North Kensington and Chelsea centres to meet local needs. They have introduced more learning opportunities for students who have different academic levels. They have also started a refurbishment project at the North Kensington centre to ensure that students have access to up-to-date facilities. Leaders and governors have a clear strategic plan for the future.

Leaders have created an effective management structure. They have recruited new managers with specialist experience in creative arts, design and media to support teaching staff. Staff state that communication has improved significantly across the college. They enjoy the monthly briefings, frequent centre meetings and the opportunities they have to come together to share ideas and good practice.

Staff feel very well supported by the leadership team. They recognise the benefits that the merger brings for students and themselves. For example, some staff have more opportunity for career progression. Managers across the three centres benefit from an established leadership programme. There is a more consistent approach for students through the central services, such as in student support.

What progress have leaders and managers made in evaluating the quality of provision at the former Kensington and Chelsea College to address the key weaknesses in the quality of education?

Significant progress

Leaders, managers and governors have taken decisive and rapid action to improve the weaknesses previously identified at the former Kensington and Chelsea College. They have implemented their quality assurance activities across the centres consistently. Leaders work closely with curriculum managers to evaluate the quality of individual curriculum areas. Through the mid-term reviews and frequent observations of teaching and learning, they pinpoint clearly specific areas for improvement.

Leaders have created and use a wide range of comprehensive reports. These reports give them clear oversight of the quality of education. This allows them to identify at curriculum, course and student level where there are potential concerns. Leaders use this information effectively to manage underperforming areas, as well as to identify areas of good practice. There have been notable improvements in some of the areas of weakness previously identified, for example in the quality of teaching and in student satisfaction.

Since the merger, leaders and managers have increased the level of student feedback they collect. They have a large number of student representatives in place, student forums in each centre and a student council. Student representatives frequently attend curriculum review meetings. This ensures that managers have first-hand information about what students like about their courses and what they feel needs to improve.

Leaders have established a range of effective cross-college committees, such as the essential English and mathematics skills and adult learning committee. This helps managers ensure that staff work towards the same consistent standard across the centres.

Leaders have implemented a more effective staff appraisal process. This links more closely to the particular areas that staff need to focus on to improve their teaching. The resulting action plans identify precisely the support and training needed to make improvements.

What progress have leaders and managers made in providing teachers at the former Kensington and Chelsea College with continuous professional development so that they help students to remember key concepts?

Significant progress

Leaders provide teachers with a good range of training and development opportunities. Teachers take part in very focused training activities to help them improve their teaching. They attend sessions on how to improve the start of their lessons. They keep up to date with their sector trends. They have completed digital skills training to help them when teaching online. As a result, teaching at the former Kensington and Chelsea College has improved.

Teachers are subject experts and have a rich knowledge of the subjects they teach. They provide clear and effective explanations of key concepts, so that students understand them. Teachers make good use of visuals, models and diagrams to add further clarity. As a result, the vast majority of students develop and remember new knowledge. Students confidently apply their knowledge and understanding in their work. For example, in photography, students explain succinctly key elements such as perspective, framing and how camera lenses work. In electronic sports (e-sports), students explain in detail how to create a brand, using logos and sponsorship. They apply this knowledge successfully on practical projects for competitions with a local theme park.

Teachers use assessment effectively to check what students know and understand. They use this information to adapt their teaching and revisit topics. Teachers are adept at using questioning to assess students' understanding of technical language or techniques. For example, in GCSE English lessons, teachers check how confidently students use language devices to improve the quality of what they write.

Teachers support students effectively to develop and practise their practical skills. In fashion and textiles sessions, students use confidently a range of techniques such as knitting, machine sewing and printing. On art courses, teachers ensure that students develop good-quality folders for their research. In these folders, students illustrate how they practise and experiment with techniques such as sketching, line formation, tracing and photography.

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