

# Sutton London Borough Council

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

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Sutton London Borough Council (known as Sutton College) was inspected in September 2022. 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 resolving the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Sutton College is a service provided by Sutton Borough Council. The college provides education and training for adult learners and apprentices. Learners take courses in subject areas such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), creative arts, and health and social care. At the time of the monitoring visit, around 2,300 adult learners were studying part-time courses, including 90 learners with learning difficulties on supported learning courses. Around 80 apprentices were enrolled on health and social care, early years education, teaching assistant and accountancy apprenticeships.

Sutton College works with three subcontractors.

### Themes

#### **What progress have leaders and managers made in following up on actions identified to improve the quality of teaching and assessment so that learners and apprentices can remember what they have learned and make good progress? Reasonable progress**

A recently restructured leadership team has introduced positive changes that are having a beneficial impact on learners and apprentices. For example, leaders and managers have improved their quality assurance processes and now have good oversight of the quality of teaching and assessment. Leaders use their knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching to plan high-quality professional development for tutors. For example, following a recent teaching workshop, tutors are more confident using techniques to help learners and apprentices remember new knowledge. As a result, tutors teach learners and apprentices well, helping them to remember more of what they have learned.

Leaders and managers do not provide suitable high-quality specialist professional development for teachers from the vocational curriculum areas who teach in supported learning. There is too much variation in the quality of teaching in supported learning.

Tutors use a range of good assessment methods to support learners and apprentices to remember new knowledge and skills. For example, in ESOL lessons, tutors use quick quizzes and tests effectively to help learners remember new vocabulary and grammar. As a result, learners can remember important new knowledge and skills between lessons.

Tutors give learners useful verbal and written feedback following assessments or assignments. For example, in pottery lessons, tutors advise students how to improve their clay kneading technique to avoid causing air bubbles. In ESOL, tutors set written homework and give learners useful written feedback before their next lesson. This high-quality feedback helps learners develop their skills and knowledge over time.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in improving the frequency and quality of reviews with apprentices and employers so that leaders can monitor apprentices' progress accurately and support them in making good progress?** **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have taken effective action to improve the quality of apprentices' progress reviews. For example, tutors hold well-structured review meetings with apprentices that now cover information, advice and guidance about their potential next steps into education or career advancement. As a result, apprentices now benefit from clearer, more useful discussions during these meetings.

Tutors, employers and apprentices use the review meetings well to discuss how apprentices can apply their new knowledge and skills in their jobs. For example, accountancy apprentices, who have learned about financial software in the classroom, use the meetings to arrange opportunities to apply their new knowledge and skills. They then practise setting up accounts and generating invoices using similar software at work. As a result, most review meetings help apprentices to make good progress.

Leaders and managers have improved, and now have good oversight of, the frequency and content of apprentices' progress review meetings, including for apprentices taught by subcontracted training providers. Managers now have the information they need to make sure that most review meetings take place with the required frequency.

Leaders and managers still have work to do to make sure that employers contribute to reviews in a timely way. In a minority of cases, records show notes from the apprentice and tutor added promptly but with employer comments added too late or without sufficient detail to be useful. As a result, staff cannot always follow up quickly on actions from the review meeting that could help apprentices make progress with their course.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in developing a curriculum that meets the individual needs of learners with SEND so they can make good progress?** **Insufficient progress**

Leaders have been too slow to take action to improve the supported learning curriculum for learners with SEND. During a period of staffing disruption, leaders did not recruit or train enough staff with the necessary expertise in SEND to improve the curriculum. As a result, learners do not have a curriculum that is ambitious or well planned enough to help them make progress.

Leaders do not have sufficient oversight of the quality of the curriculum in the supported learning department. This is because they do not quality assure effectively enough the curriculum for learners who do not study formal qualifications. Consequently, leaders and managers do not have a clear enough idea of the strengths and weaknesses of their supported learning curriculum.

Leaders and managers have introduced an appropriate interview and preliminary assessment process for learners with SEND. However, they do not make sure that tutors use the information they gather about learners' starting points well enough when planning a course of study for each learner. Too often, learners study the same curriculum as their peers regardless of what they know and can do at the start of the programme.

Tutors do not clearly identify or set targets in the areas that learners with SEND need to improve, in order to make progress and achieve their long-term goals. As a result, managers and tutors are unclear about how to support individual learners towards achieving their goals and aspirations.

Tutors include a valuable enrichment experience for learners once each term in every subject in supported learning. For example, learners taking a photography course went on a trip to a museum to apply the skills they had developed in class by photographing the exhibits. Learners enjoy these enrichment opportunities.

**What progress have leaders, managers and staff made in providing learners and apprentices with good-quality careers information, advice and guidance so that they know their options on completing their courses?** **Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken effective steps to improve the quality of the guidance that they give learners and apprentices about their next steps. For example, tutors now teach learners about relevant careers and educational opportunities throughout their courses.

Managers and tutors include relevant careers information in the curriculum, such as careers talks by professional florists for floristry students. Learners have a clear picture of the opportunities available to them upon completion of their courses.

Tutors make effective use of the information that they have about learners to tailor careers advice for them. For example, tutors inform ESOL learners who are learning English to improve their job prospects about job fairs in the local area. Consequently, learners know about suitable local employment opportunities.

Leaders and managers have improved learners' access to the college's independent careers guidance service. Staff encourage learners and apprentices to book appointments with advisers. Careers staff also visit lessons to discuss job roles and qualifications with learners. Most learners know about the service, which is well used.

Leaders and managers have improved the quality of guidance that they provide for apprentices, including those taught by subcontractors. Staff and apprentices now discuss apprentices' next steps in education or work with suitable frequency.

Staff do not provide learners with SEND with suitably personalised support about their possible next steps. Although the college has partnered with an external agency to provide better careers support for learners with SEND, leaders acknowledge that there is more work to do to make certain that all learners with SEND have tailored careers advice and guidance.

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