

United Colleges Group

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	10290903
Name of lead inspector:	Paul Manning, His Majesty's Inspector
Inspection dates:	18 and 19 October 2023
Type of provider:	General further education college
Address:	25 Paddington Green London W2 1NB

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

United Colleges Group was inspected in November 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.

Themes

What progress have leaders made in improving teachers' skills so that learners receive high-quality teaching, including effective feedback and support to achieve their courses? **Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken effective actions to improve teachers' skills. They have increased staff resources to support the continual improvement of the quality of teaching that learners receive. Leaders have recruited development coaches and advanced practitioners to provide training and mentorship to new and established teachers to improve their teaching and assessment practices.

Leaders have put in place effective professional development activities for teachers and curriculum managers. Managers are better prepared for challenging conversations with their teams and they have improved oversight of data, which they use effectively to target support in underperforming areas. In most cases, the number of young people who complete and achieve their qualifications has increased. However, it still needs further improvement.

There continues to be some inconsistency in the standards of teaching. Most teachers teach and assess learners effectively, use questions well and provide learners with helpful feedback so that they know how to improve their work. However, in a few cases, teachers do not plan the content of lessons well, or check for understanding effectively.

Leaders use the results from their observation of teaching and learning and quality assurance activities effectively. Leaders analyse the outcomes, find common themes, and include them in the frequent training that teachers attend.

What progress have leaders made to improve young learners' attendance and punctuality?

Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, leaders and teachers have made sure that all staff and learners are clear on the expectations of attendance and punctuality. Leaders have sensibly revised the attendance policy, which defines roles and responsibilities and links to further policies such as a fitness to study policy. Learners are clear about when it is and when it is not appropriate to attend college.

Leaders have implemented an approach to attendance across all college campuses that is beginning to have a positive impact. The proportion of learners who now regularly attend their lessons has increased. However, there is still some inconsistency between classes. For example, learners' attendance at A-level law and health and social care courses is high, but in level 1 business and functional skills courses it remains too low.

Leaders recognise that many learners are from deprived communities. They understand learners' barriers to attending lessons and arriving on time and support them to overcome them. Leaders have adopted a trauma-informed approach to tackle lateness. However, too many learners continue to arrive late for their lessons.

What progress have leaders made to provide learners with high needs suitable teaching activities and appropriate assistive support to meet their individual needs?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have taken effective action to overcome the challenge of recruiting staff with specialisms in SEND. Leaders have taken the approach of recruiting from within by establishing in-house training for learning support assistants (LSA) to become specialist teachers. For example, LSA at the Maida Vale campus use the strategies they have learned in their teacher training effectively. At the Willesden campus, staff who are newly promoted as teachers report positively on the training and development they have had.

Teachers use appropriate strategies so that learners can take part and contribute to group activities successfully. They do this by encouraging learners to write down their answers. LSAs support learners to share their thoughts and feelings. Teachers use questioning effectively to check learners' understanding of key definitions. Teachers use discussion-based activities where learners exchange their knowledge on sensitive topics such as online safety, sexual harassment and abuse.

Teachers set learners suitable individual targets which link well to their education, health and care plan outcomes. For example, in cooking classes, teachers set individual targets to help learners improve their independent cooking skills and their dexterity using a kitchen knife correctly and steadily.

Leaders and managers have improved arrangements to provide learners with the therapeutic support they need. For example, speech and language therapists contribute to reviews of learners' progress and visit classes to make sure learners receive the support they need. However, in a few instances, access to specialist assistive resources has been delayed due to late confirmation that students will be starting at the college.

On employability programmes, teachers do not adapt what they teach to take into account what learners already know and what they need to know and be able to do to meet their learning goals. Consequently, a few learners are not sufficiently challenged by their programme. Leaders and managers are piloting new approaches to better teach learners with high needs.

What progress have leaders made to make sure that staff provide, and make apprentices aware of, effective personal development opportunities? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have taken effective action to increase apprentices' awareness of the risks associated with radicalisation. Teachers provide additional sessions focusing on the risks relating to radicalisation. Apprentices who have attended these sessions are aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. These apprentices know how to report any concerns.

Staff support apprentices effectively to plan their next steps and future careers. Tutors inform apprentices about different career pathways. Refrigeration and air-conditioning apprentices know about different career routes, such as maintenance, servicing, design or consultancy roles. Many apprentices receive support with information on how to become self-employed.

A few apprentices benefit from opportunities that enhance their course beyond their qualification. Refrigeration and air conditioning apprentices attend exhibitions where they learn about technological developments within these areas. Plumbing apprentices take part in qualifying events for world skills competitions. Leaders have plans to introduce a bespoke enrichment programme for apprentices. This has not been fully implemented and, currently, too few apprentices take part in activities outside of their vocational studies.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that apprentices understand the importance of healthy personal relationships or the importance of keeping themselves healthy. Leaders have designed a new tutorial programme to cover these topics. However, this is in its early stages.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023