

Croydon College

Reinspection monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Rebecca Jennings, His Majesty's Inspector

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Type of provider: General further education college

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first reinspection monitoring visit to Croydon College following publication of the inspection report on 19 May 2023, which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 2,578 learners aged 16 to 19 on study programmes. These were split across the two sites, with 1,609 young learners studying vocational programmes at the Croydon campus, and 977 young learners studying at the Coulsdon campus. There were 2,907 adult learners studying at the Croydon campus. There were 254 learners at the college who were in receipt of high needs funding.

Themes

What progress have leaders made in making sure that learners with high needs develop the knowledge and skills to achieve their goals, including their education, health and care plan outcomes?

Reasonable progress

Senior leaders have made effective changes to the leadership and governance of the high needs provision. Leaders have put in place a detailed, ambitious and effective improvement plan.

Leaders have improved the curriculum for learners with high needs so that it is suitable to meet learners' needs. They have included enterprise lessons, and plans are well advanced for a range of enterprise projects, such as a new college shop.

Leaders have trained staff to set useful activities for learners with high needs that include skills and tasks relating to work. For example, teachers set helpful targets to improve learners' employability skills, such as timekeeping and communication. Staff hold insightful discussions with learners about different aspects of business, such as target audiences for different business types. As a result, learners gain deeper knowledge of work.

Leaders arrange for a high proportion of learners in supported learning to attend work placements and other work-related learning activities as part of their curriculum. As a result, learners are well prepared for work.

Leaders have started to make sure that staff set learners targets aligned to their education, health and care plans. In most instances, tutors and learning support assistants share information about learners' outcomes and work effectively to, for example, help learners work as part of a group to deliver a presentation. As a result, learners with high needs achieve well. The majority achieve their curricular goals.

Staff are not consistently skilled at setting targets to help learners make progress. In too many cases, staff do not adapt the targets they set sufficiently based on what learners know and can do at the start of their programme. Although staff record and evidence progress effectively, they do not set specific targets for learners' next steps. As a result, learners are not clear about what they have to do to move on to their next steps.

What progress have leaders and managers made in making sure that young learners receive the support they need to access all aspects of the intended curriculum, including work experience, to make progress and achieve their qualifications?

Insufficient progress

In the 2022-2023 academic year, and since the previous inspection, leaders and governors failed to identify that staff had not taught or assessed aspects of the A-level curriculum at the Coulsdon campus correctly to prepare learners suitably for external examinations. As a result, leaders did not take swift enough action to tackle low achievement.

While the proportion of learners who achieved their qualifications rose relative to the previous year, it remains too low for young learners, particularly at the Coulsdon campus. Leaders have not managed improvement across enough subjects. However, in subject areas such as health and social care, and childcare at the Croydon campus, the vast majority of learners achieve their qualification, and nearly half of them achieve high grades. Considering many learners arrive at the college without any qualifications, the proportion of learners who achieve high grades in GCSE English and mathematics is good.

Leaders have recently appointed a new principal at Coulsdon and are training many teachers at this campus to improve their practice. Leaders have recently started to monitor learners' progress closely. For example, they now have oversight of all learners' progress and put appropriate support in place if learners fall behind. Most learners know whether they are on track and the areas they need to improve through frequent assessment. However, in a few instances, learners do not know what they need to do to improve.

Too many learners are not clear about how they will complete work experience. Only a small proportion have confirmed placements. Following the previous inspection, leaders and managers changed the management of work experience and work-related activity, and staff took appropriate action to source placements for learners.

Most teachers provide learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with appropriate support to help them to make progress. For example, they arrange additional time for examinations for learners with dyslexia. However, staff are not consistently confident in how best to teach learners with SEND.

What progress have leaders and managers made in teaching learners and apprentices a high-quality personal development curriculum, which includes careers guidance, to prepare them for life in modern Britain?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have put in place a structured and purposeful curriculum for tutorials. Teachers teach learners how to keep themselves safe from local risks. They also teach a useful range of topics, including diversity and financial literacy. Staff focus on improving learners' well-being and managing their emotions. As a result, learners benefit from learning useful and helpful information. In a few instances, attendance at tutorials is too low.

Tutors ensure that learners are aware of British values. Most learners understand these and embody the values, including mutual respect, around the college. However, too many learners do not understand how these values apply to their own life, study and future careers.

Leaders monitor the quality of teaching of the tutorial curriculum effectively and make sure that, in most instances, the content is appropriate for different groups, including learners of English for speakers of other languages. A few teachers do not have enough confidence to hold rich discussions with learners when teaching topics in which they do not have expertise.

Leaders offer a wide range of activities to help broaden learners' interests and talents. For example, they offer horse riding, crocheting, chess club and a range of sports, including football, netball and basketball. Most learners know about and appreciate the range of activities. Some students struggle to attend due to work and college commitments. Leaders acknowledge that the level of participation needs to improve.

Staff helpfully inform learners about the range of careers available to them. Most of the learners who apply for university are successful. However, a minority of learners do not know where to get advice about career options if they are not going to university.

What progress have leaders made in creating an environment where learners feel comfortable and meet the expected standards of behaviour and attendance?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have taken appropriate and effective action to create a culture of positive behaviour across the college. For example, at the Coulsdon campus, learning mentors work with learners in order to guide them, including through the use of support plans and clear behavioural targets, to improve their conduct.

Leaders and managers have redesigned policies about behaviour and attendance and place a greater responsibility for behaviour and attendance on teaching staff. Staff across the college are clear about the expectations for behaviour and attendance and discuss any concerns with learners appropriately.

Staff set clear expectations about learners' behaviour at induction and during lessons. Through tutorials, teachers raise learners' awareness of diversity. For example, they have introduced a tutorial about LGBTQ+ awareness. Leaders host societies for learners from different backgrounds and with diverse beliefs to meet and discuss any issues. Learners show tolerance towards each other, and learners from different groups feel comfortable around the college. For example, during debates in tutorials, learners listen respectfully to each other and, during culinary skills and electronics lessons, learners are attentive and respond respectfully to staff.

Leaders and managers have created a calm atmosphere across the college. They have invested in spaces and activities for learners, such as quiet areas and a well-being area. Staff supervise these areas effectively, and learners appreciate the presence of college and security staff around the college, who model positive behaviour. As a result, learners value the spaces in which they can socialise inside the college.

Leaders have improved the overall attendance across the college, particularly at the Couldson campus. Leaders and teachers make sure that learners have a clear understanding of the expectations and benefits of attending college. However, in too many lessons during the monitoring visit, attendance was too low.

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