

East Surrey College

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

Unique reference number:	130824
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

East Surrey College was inspected in December 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.

In early February 2019, East Surrey College, incorporating Reigate School of Art, merged with John Ruskin College to form the East Surrey College Corporation (trading as Orbital South Colleges). The college has two main sites based in Selsdon and Redhill. East Surrey College Corporation (ESC) provide a range of vocational, further and higher education courses as well as apprenticeships. At the time of the inspection there were approximately 2,500 students on education programmes for young people, 1,000 adult learners and 660 apprentices in training. There were smaller numbers of students with high needs and students aged 14 to 16.

Themes

What progress have leaders made to improve the behaviour of students in communal areas of college sites at the East Surrey campus **Significant progress**

Leaders and managers have made significant improvements in the behaviour of students around the campus since the last inspection. Students' behaviour around the site is generally calm and engaged. Students are respectful towards staff and visitors. Staff swiftly and consistently tackle any unwanted behaviours. As a result, students comply quickly and willingly.

Leaders very effectively led a whole college approach to improving student behaviour. They enhanced the role of duty managers, improved engagement with facilities staff and increased the presence of staff around high traffic spaces at movement times. As a result, there has been a significant reduction of inappropriate behaviours around the college site.

Staff have benefitted from helpful training on behaviour management. They talk positively about this new approach and rightly recognise that behaviour management is now everyone's responsibility. Staff feel well-equipped, empowered and supported to tackle unwanted behaviours. As a result, staff including those who were not previously student-facing, now confidently tackle students to pick up litter or those who are not wearing lanyards.

What progress have leaders have made to improve students' attendance and punctuality

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection leaders and managers have focused carefully on improving attendance and punctuality. They have trained teaching staff to provide strong starts to lessons. As a result, students are now better motivated to attend on time and most do. Leaders have introduced positive incentives such as bursary schemes, gold stars and sports club memberships which encourage students to attend. Although it is still early to see the impact of many of these actions, overall college attendance has shown a slight increase.

Leaders rightly recognise that improvements in attendance are inconsistent. Although attendance at level 2 and level 3 has improved, attendance at level one, and for apprenticeships has shown a slight decline. Leaders monitor attendance data closely. They work with staff to put in place helpful, targeted interventions for courses with low attendance. For example, they introduced a new attendance and participation officer role to support level one construction students. As a result, learners, some with previously very low attendance, are being retained and reintegrated into learning successfully.

What progress have leaders made to ensure teaching staff give apprentices feedback which helps them to understand and improve their work.

Significant progress

Since the last inspection leaders and managers have worked quickly and effectively to improve the quality of feedback apprentices receive. Leaders have given teachers and assessors helpful training on providing feedback. Staff value this training and use it in their practice well. As a result, apprentices now benefit from useful feedback and know how to improve their work. For example, teachers of engineering apprentices provide 'even better if' comments so apprentices continually develop the quality of their work.

Teachers and assessors now work closely together to understand better the progress apprentices are making. Assessors use this information very well in frequent, helpful meetings with apprentices. As a result, apprentices, and their employers, are clear on the progress they are making and actions they must take to improve.

Most apprentices value the feedback they receive and make swift progress as a result. For example, carpentry apprentices applied feedback about using an adjustable square, successfully and confidently in their later work. Hair apprentices use helpful feedback to improve their understanding of cutting techniques.

What progress have leaders made to ensure that all apprentices receive effective careers advice and guidance that supports them with their next steps.

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have improved the careers advice and guidance available to apprentices. They have recently introduced a thoughtfully sequenced programme of careers education. Well-qualified careers advisors teach workshops that prepare apprentices for their next steps well. For example, apprentices learn about goal setting and progression opportunities before moving on to build social media profiles and write CVs. Although it is too early for all apprentices to have benefitted, those who have attended the workshops valued them highly.

Since the last inspection, leaders have strengthened apprentices' progress reviews so discussions now cover career development plans. They have introduced access to individual career guidance sessions, which apprentices have welcomed. Apprentices and their employers benefit from helpful newsletters with information about final assessments and career options. As a result, most apprentices now feel well prepared for their next steps.

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