

Yeovil College

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

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Type of provider:	General further education college
Address:	Mudford Road Yeovil Somerset BA21 4DR

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Yeovil College was inspected in March 2023. 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.

Yeovil College is a general further education college in Yeovil, Somerset. The college provides a range of vocational, academic and higher education courses from pre-entry level to level 6, apprenticeships at levels 2 to 6 and provision for learners with high needs. At the time of the monitoring visit, around 1,500 learners aged 16 to 18, 800 adult learners and 1,100 apprentices were studying at the college. There were 119 learners in receipt of high-needs funding, of whom just under two-fifths were studying on programmes specifically designed for them. The college works with five subcontractors who provide education to learners aged 16 to 18 and to adults.

Themes

What progress have leaders made to improve the quality of programmes for learners with high needs? Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have been relentless in prioritising and tackling the weaknesses identified in the provision for learners with high needs. They promptly sought help and advice from external consultants. They visited other providers to identify and learn from their strong practice. Consequently, leaders have significantly increased their knowledge and understanding of learners with high needs. They have used this new knowledge to inform and take many remedial actions. For example, leaders and managers have redesigned the curriculum for learners with the most complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders and managers have met with parents and other stakeholders to gain feedback on how they might improve the quality of the provision for learners with high needs. They have used the feedback well to inform changes to the curriculum, such as improving the arrangements for learners who transition from school to college. They have increased the frequency and quality of communications with parents by staff using a range of methods, such as termly forums with parents, a newsletter produced by a learner, and a weekly communication book for sharing information about a learner.

Leaders and managers have increased the opportunities for learners with high needs to take part in work experience. They have developed new 'learning companies' that provide learners with the opportunity to work alongside paid staff within the college, such as working with estate and learning centre teams. Leaders have developed new

and effective partnerships to provide learners with opportunities to work with employers located in the community. For example, leaders work with a charity and the local authority to help a few learners to gain employment through a supported internship programme. As a result, learners gain a variety of new experiences, and develop a range of new skills and knowledge, such as unpacking parcels, dealing with supplier requests and entering data, using computerised systems.

Leaders and managers have focused rightly on gaining a more comprehensive understanding of learners' starting points. They have made numerous changes to the way in which they recognise and record information about learners and what they know and can do when they join the college. Staff now set learners targets based on those identified in their Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Staff use these targets well to inform their teaching. However, teachers and managers do not break the targets down into measurable milestones, so that staff can use these to provide learners with additional support, to plan learning sessions and to identify the progress that they make over time.

Staff now use online learning plans to record brief information about the support they provide to learners. They also record feedback from meetings with learners, and the teaching strategies suggested by the special educational needs coordinator. However, the quality of the record keeping does not enable leaders to identify exactly what type and how much support is being provided to learners and whether this is increasing or decreasing over time. Staff do not set learners specific targets based on their individual goals, aspirations and areas for improvement. As a result, leaders are unable to recognise and take the remedial actions required to improve the quality of provision, or to assess how well teachers are using the suggested teaching strategies in their learning sessions.

Leaders and managers monitor closely the impact of the changes they have made to the provision for learners with high needs. They use a range of strategies, such as internal monitoring visits and quality improvement action plans to identify the progress made in improving the quality of provision. As a result, leaders have evidence of some improvements and use their findings to inform further remedial actions.

Governors have recently appointed a new governor with specialist SEND knowledge and experience. Leaders plan to utilise the knowledge of the new governor to help to inform further quality improvement developments, such as, developing a project to closely track the quality of the transition arrangements of learners into college and to assess the ambitions that staff have for their learners.

What progress have leaders made to ensure that teachers and support staff in academic and vocational areas have the necessary skills and knowledge to support learners with high needs effectively?

Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have ensured that teachers and learning support practitioners have taken part in a wide range of continual professional development activities. For example, workshops led by an external professional on neurodiversity, the use of EHCPs in teaching and learning, and how to support learners and track the progress they are making. Staff use their new knowledge of SEND to inform their teaching and the support they provide to learners. Staff's implementation of this new knowledge is beginning to have a positive impact on learners, such as improved attendance rates and a decrease in the support they require over time. However, managers recognise rightly that further training and support is required by the staff who teach learners with more complex SEND to enable them to use fully a range of appropriate teaching and learning strategies.

What progress have leaders made to ensure that all learners have a secure knowledge of the signs and dangers associated with radicalisation? **Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have revised the tutorial programme to include new and useful content on the dangers and signs of radicalisation. Teachers now follow a standardised learning programme which ensures that all teachers teach learners useful content on themes such as how to protect themselves from extremist views. Leaders have identified correctly that while learners now have a basic knowledge of these topics, further improvements are required to ensure all learners develop and retain a deep understanding of the knowledge.

At the time of the monitoring visit, leaders were finalising their plans for a new model of the tutorial programme, which would allow for the teaching of more in-depth content and greater opportunities for staff to revisit and checking learning. However, it is not yet possible to judge the impact of these plans.

What progress have leaders made to monitor improvement plans more effectively and ensure they have a positive impact on the quality of education? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have created a new quality improvement process that aligns well the curriculum quality and whole college improvement plans. This provides leaders at all levels with a clear overview of how each action impacts on the wider quality improvement journey. These actions are taken at curriculum level and monitored carefully by senior leaders to ensure that the link between the curriculum and the whole college quality improvement is clear. As a result, curriculum teams experience a greater sense of ownership of the quality improvement actions they take and feel better supported by their line managers and senior leaders.

Leaders and managers place greater emphasis and focus on measuring what learners and apprentices know and can do at the start of their programmes. However, the impact of the remedial actions taken is not yet captured sufficiently well in the plans to be sufficiently useful in decision-making and for when creating a next steps plan.

Leaders made the decision to bring external expertise into the college to train managers in how to improve the quality of their self-assessment activity and subsequent quality improvement plans. Managers now understand more thoroughly how to be critical of the progress they are making in developing learners' and apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours. They now know how to form appropriate quality improvement plans from their more accurate conclusions. They assure themselves of the quality of the improvement plans they design by monitoring the progress made by learners. Managers use incremental targets to track the knowledge and skills that learners and apprentices develop over time. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these actions.

Leaders now help to assure themselves of the impact of the improvements they have made by carrying out internal monitoring visits across all curriculum areas. They engage external support for this activity and ask challenging questions of curriculum leaders to help to maintain their focus on continuous improvement.

What progress have leaders made in ensuring they have an effective oversight of the processes designed to maintain learner safety? **Significant progress**

Leaders have swiftly and effectively revised the process for the management of safeguarding information. They have appointed a new deputy to support the designated safeguarding lead and to ensure the robustness of the process and its implementation. Leaders now ensure that all safeguarding cases are closed in a timely manner, with an additional safety feature, requiring two staff to check and sign off completion. This new process has been in place since summer 2023 and has addressed the area for improvement identified during the previous inspection. Leaders have provided staff with additional training in a range of safeguarding themes, including how to correctly report incidents and concerns. Consequently, the safeguarding case records sampled by inspectors show an appropriate level of detail and that internal processes were being followed well.

What progress have leaders made to ensure that governors receive sufficient timely information to hold college leaders to account? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders now provide governors with key information at least one week in advance of board meetings to enable them to scrutinise plans and understand the rationale for decisions that are made by leaders. Governors have taken the opportunity to refresh their approach to committee and full corporation meetings so that the purpose for

each is clear and to ensure that the focus on the impact on learners is maintained. For example, leaders have reduced the detail and number of topics covered in curriculum and quality meetings so that they can focus their attention on the most important themes linked to the quality improvement plan.

Leaders ensure that governors now receive key information such as learner attendance and achievement data. This enables them to hold leaders to account more effectively. Leaders have strengthened this further by developing a governor dashboard to provide governors with a range of information in real-time.

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