

Chichester College Group

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	130843
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Type of provider:	General further education college
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

With over 17,000 learners and apprentices, Chichester College Group is a very large general further education college providing education and training across West Sussex, Brighton and Hove.

The college group consists of Brighton Met, Brinsbury, Chichester, Crawley, Haywards Heath, Northbrook and Worthing Colleges. Chichester College Group merged with the former Greater Brighton Metropolitan College, now operating as Brighton Met and Northbrook Colleges, in August 2022.

Prior to merger, the Chichester College Group was inspected in March 2020, at which time inspectors judged overall effectiveness to be outstanding. The former Greater Brighton Metropolitan College was previously inspected in October 2019 and found to require improvement.

At the time of inspection, there were approximately 10,000 16- to 18-year-old learners studying education programmes for young people, 5,470 adult learners, 2,500 apprentices and 278 learners in receipt of high-needs funding. Of these, at the time of the monitoring visit, there were 3,130 16- to 18-year-old learners, 449 apprentices, 1,680 adult learners and 138 learners with high needs studying at campuses that were part of the former Greater Brighton Metropolitan College.

The purpose of the monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in the merger of the Chichester College Group with the former Greater Brighton Metropolitan College. This included the progress that leaders and managers made in resolving the main areas for improvement identified at the most recent inspection of former Greater Brighton Metropolitan College.

Themes

How much progress have governors and senior leaders made in strengthening the leadership and management of the merged college, ensuring effective governance and oversight are in place and holding managers to account for improvements to the quality of education for learners? **Significant progress**

Leaders thoroughly planned the effective transition of the former Greater Brighton Metropolitan and Northbrook College into the Chichester College Group. Senior leaders and governors have successfully transformed the culture at the college. Leaders responsible for quality have focused on ensuring consistency across the group. They have spearheaded a focus on cultural change, communication and

engagement. As a result, staff recognise the purpose and benefits of quality on the learner experience. Staff value the effective and frequent communication from leaders and managers. Staff have embraced the challenges of merger positively and are rightly proud of the achievements they have since made.

Governors have a strong understanding of their legislative roles and responsibilities and work with college leaders proactively to discharge these appropriately. They have a very secure grasp of the provider's role in meeting the vastly diverse needs of stakeholders across the group. They ensure that there is close alignment between the work of the college and the Learning and Skills Improvement partnerships. Leaders' recently commissioned external review of governance has provided valuable reassurance of what they do well as a governing body and areas for improvement.

Governors and leaders have a clear focus on the importance of succession planning for both governors and college leaders and managers. The revised staff structure has provided many positive opportunities for staff to progress in their careers. Leaders' well-considered professional staff development programme provides opportunities for aspirational staff to progress in their careers.

Curriculum managers benefit from comprehensive and evidential data packs which provide them with a comprehensive overview of the impact of their curriculum on learners. For example, they receive data on attendance, retention and participation in extra-curricular activities. Staff recognise the benefits of the support they receive in improving their curriculums and teaching practice which is no longer seen as a punitive process.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in accurately evaluating and improving the quality of apprenticeship provision at the former Greater Brighton Metropolitan College campuses? Significant progress

Senior leaders have introduced new structures and processes that ensure they now have appropriate oversight of the quality of apprenticeship provision. They have set out clear expectations and accountability measures that ensure managers and staff rightly focus on helping apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for their apprenticeship. Leaders and managers now closely monitor the progress that apprentices make, identify where they fall behind and take swift action where necessary to help them catch up. As a result, the number of apprentices who go beyond their planned end has significantly reduced.

Leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses in the provision very well. They use a range of practical processes and activities to aid their evaluation. For example, they observe staff working with apprentices, and they seek feedback from apprentices and employers. Managers use this information well to inform staff development activities and introduce positive improvements to apprentices' training. For example, they now provide flexible one-to-one or group online lessons for

English and mathematics, which accommodate the needs of different apprentices effectively.

Leaders have enhanced support arrangements ensuring apprentices receive the help they need in a timely way. Staff have high expectations for apprentices. They want them to succeed and progress into rewarding careers. Recently appointed apprenticeship coaches support apprentices with a wide range of personal and professional challenges, helping sustain apprentices in learning. As a result, more apprentices complete their apprenticeship successfully.

Leaders have reinforced arrangements to establish what apprentices know and can do at the beginning of their programme. They use this information to inform the development of bespoke training plans well that set out how apprentices will acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to successfully complete their apprenticeship. However, in a small number of cases, staff monitor apprentices' progress towards qualifications rather than the knowledge, skills and behaviour they gain. As a result, they miss opportunities to support apprentices to develop to the highest standard they are able.

Leaders set clear expectations regarding the quality and frequency of activities to review apprentices' progress. They introduced new systems and processes that help leaders track apprentices' progress closely. They work with employers to engage them in setting and reviewing their targets. Where apprentices make slow progress, staff take appropriate action to help them catch up quickly.

A small minority of apprentices experienced disruption to the start of their programme which hindered their progress and learning experience.

How much progress have leaders and managers made ensuring that 16- to 18-year-old students at the former Greater Brighton Metropolitan College campuses take part in meaningful, external work experience placements, including increasing the number of students completing these placements? Significant progress

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers identified the need to improve staff resourcing in this area. They have subsequently invested in and developed an effective work experience coordination team that works closely with curriculum areas to improve both the number and quality of placements. Work experience coordinators are securely integrated into curriculum areas. They work closely with the programme manager and teachers to understand, adapt and meet the work placement needs specific to the areas and the learners within them.

Leaders identified the need to increase the number of employers they work with. They now collaborate closely with employers and other stakeholders to increase the quality and number of placements available to learners. Learners also benefit from

the expertise and links that staff have from their time in industry. Staff work closely with a range of internationally recognised employers to prepare learners for work in their sectors.

Leaders and managers have introduced new processes to record and monitor the experience of learners, including work placement. Leaders ensure that this area is a keen focus for quality improvement to ensure that the actions they have taken are sustainable. Leaders, managers and staff are now able to quickly review the quantity and quality of work placement from individual level to whole college group. They use this information to intervene rapidly and successfully where learners have not completed sufficient or high-quality placements.

As a result of the actions taken by leaders, there has been significant improvement to the number of learners who complete work placement. Leaders and managers have identified the need to further improve the methods they use to evaluate the quality of placements. They have introduced new systems to allow for this, but it is too early to judge the impact of these actions.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in supporting relevant staff of levels 2 and 3 courses to develop the skills they need to teach learners with high needs at the former Greater Brighton Metropolitan College campuses? Significant progress

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders and managers introduced college-wide training to all staff to help them understand the barriers to learning and engagement in education encountered by students with additional learning needs. Staff are now empowered to understand the needs of their students. They plan and implement appropriate support strategies such as increasing or tapering support in response to learner needs. As a result, students are enabled to engage in college life and progress in their learning.

Leaders and managers have developed a comprehensive assessment process for students that aids their transition from school to college successfully. Staff check learners' initial knowledge, skills and aspirations carefully at the start of the course. They adapt programmes to meet learners' specific needs. As a result, learners with additional needs take part in challenging learning programmes that develop their knowledge, skills and independence significantly.

Students participate in a wide range of curriculum and enrichment activities. They make considerable progress towards their short-, medium- and long-term targets. Lecturers set consistently demanding goals for students, which contribute to them exceeding their planned outcomes. Students gain valuable knowledge and skills for future learning and employment, such as confidence and resilience, teamwork and communication.

Staff support students with profound and multiple learning disabilities effectively to engage in their education fully, self-regulate their behaviours and so develop significant new skills. For example, leaders changed the college's behaviour policy to better support students, who now take greater responsibility for managing their behaviours.

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