

# Newbury College

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

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<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Mike Finn, His Majesty's Inspector
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<b>Type of provider:</b>	General further education college
<b>Address:</b>	Monks Lane, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 7TD.

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Newbury College was inspected in June 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.

Newbury College is a general further education college located in Newbury, West Berkshire. The college has one main campus. They also provide a range of football academies for young people in the West Berkshire region. Newbury College offers a wide range of programmes for adults, young people and apprentices from entry level to level 7. Currently, the college has 3,455 students, of whom 304 are apprentices, 958 are students aged 16 to 19 years old, and the remainder are adult students. There are 128 students in receipt of high needs funding.

### Themes

**What progress have leaders and managers made in making sure that students on education programmes for young people are taught a full personal development curriculum, including through work-related activities?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have taken effective steps to provide an ambitious personal development curriculum for young students. Expert staff use their experience well to design and implement a programme of learning that is focused on the knowledge students need for their futures. Students are well prepared to navigate their lives in modern Britain.

As a result of improved teaching, most students can remember what they have been taught about personal development topics that have been covered in tutorials. For example, they understand the features of healthy relationships, how to manage stress and how to improve their own mental health. Students know how these issues can impact on their own lives and how to access extra support if they need it.

As the curriculum is new, several topics are yet to be taught. For example, teachers do not make sure that students understand how to stay physically healthy. As a result, several students are less aware of how to make positive diet and exercise choices. There are plans in place to teach these topics.

Leaders and staff develop students' character and confidence effectively. For example, through asking them to present their ideas or work to the class. Students are better equipped to speak to people they do not know, and they improve their wider social skills. As a result, students are refining the skills they will use in further study or work.

Leaders and managers offer level 3 students high-quality, work-related experiences. Where students attend work placements, they benefit from experiences that help them to understand how classroom theory relates to industry practice. Leaders do not currently offer similar opportunities to students studying at other levels. Leaders have robust plans to provide high-quality, work-related experiences to all students, but it is too early to see the impact of these plans.

Staff do not make sure that students benefit from a broad enough range of enrichment activities to develop their wider interests and talents. Staff have gathered students' views about clubs and activities they would like the college to offer, and these are being matched to staff expertise. Leaders have constructed a list of activities that will be rolled out for September 2024, including music groups, gym and sports classes and cookery sessions. However, it is too soon to see the benefit to students.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in making sure that the quality of English and mathematics courses is improved so that students make good progress in these subjects? Reasonable progress**

Leaders, managers and teachers have improved their monitoring and tracking of students' progress and lesson attendance. They make effective use of the information they gather. For example, programme leaders quickly identify students falling behind in both mathematics and English and take action to provide them with the support they need. As a result, most students make good progress and attend well.

Teachers plan the curriculum effectively at weekly programme meetings. They consider the topics that students are struggling to understand. They then plan how they will revisit these specific areas in lessons or revision sessions. Students go on to produce work to a reasonable and sometimes high standard. For example, in English, students develop more detailed narrative responses over time. Students know and remember more, compared to their starting points at the beginning of the year.

Teachers provide students with clear and constructive feedback in lessons. This immediate feedback ensures teachers are aware of any gaps or misconceptions in students' understanding. Teachers correct these quickly, so that students' understanding improves.

Leaders and managers have planned to introduce learning walks to evaluate the quality of teaching in English and mathematics. Where improvements are needed, plans show that staff will be allocated a mentor to support them to improve their teaching or assessment skills. Currently, leaders and managers are not clear enough about the areas for improvement in teaching, because these learning walks are yet to start.

**What progress have teachers made in improving their use of assessment to monitor progress and inform future teaching?**

**Significant progress**

Leaders work effectively with teachers to make considerable improvements to the way they use assessment. Teachers use assessment to identify gaps and misconceptions in students' knowledge. They use outcomes from these assessments to inform the teaching of subsequent lessons. For example, on motor vehicle level 1 and 2 courses, staff use electronic software to track students' progress and knowledge recall through quizzes, multiple choice questions and practice assessments. These help staff identify topics students need to practise further. As a result, students understand more of what they are taught.

Staff provide students with clear and helpful feedback on their practical and assignment work. Students know the specific steps they need to take to improve their work. For example, in level 2 childcare, students use different coloured pens to make it clear how they have acted on feedback. Consequently, students produce work at or above the expected standard and their work improves over time.

Teachers continually review assessment outcomes to adjust how they plan the curriculum. For example, in GCSE English, following mock examinations, teachers recognised that students did not fully understand transaction and narrative writing. They have adjusted the scheme of teaching, so that in future, students spend more time on these aspects of the curriculum.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in making sure that staff in foundation learning receive effective training, so they can support students to make good progress?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders have improved the structure of staffing in the foundation learning area. Workload is more manageable for staff, and support assistants stay longer in their jobs. These actions are improving the quality of the provision.

Leaders make sure that staff benefit from useful professional development. They provide staff with specialist training to support students with autism or complex behavioural needs. They also train staff to use speech and language strategies effectively in lessons. As a result, staff develop their expertise and meet students' needs effectively.

Leaders have improved the quality of target setting for students with high needs. Teachers set targets that are specific. They break these down into incremental steps that are achievable for students. Teachers and support staff review each students' progress daily and capture their views about how well they have done. As a result, teachers and support staff have an excellent awareness of the progress students are making. They are very clear about the next steps required for students to further develop their knowledge and skills.

Teachers and support staff help students to make good progress during their time at college. For example, staff provide appropriate support in cookery lessons. They ask useful questions to help students measure ingredients accurately. They encourage students to find suitable equipment by matching pictures to cupboards and drawers. As a result, students prepare well for independent living.

Staff provide helpful feedback on students' work. They identify positive aspects, as well as areas they need to improve on. However, they do not make sure students respond to this feedback or take action to improve their work.

Staff provide students with helpful careers advice and guidance. However, they do not set students clear enough targets related to their next steps. Students are unclear about the actions they need to take to move towards independence, employment or education.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in improving behaviour around the college?**

**Significant progress**

Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken very positive steps to improve students' behaviour around the college. They have appointed positive behaviour coaches, who work closely with students to improve their behaviour and attitudes. Staff set very high expectations that are clearly understood by all students. They use a simple card system to flag inappropriate behaviours. Consequently, behaviour around the college, including in the canteen and during lesson transition, is exceptional. Students demonstrate consistently high levels of respect towards one another and staff. Students who attended college last year rightly recognise the considerable improvement in student behaviour.

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