

Macclesfield College

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

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Address:	Park Lane Macclesfield Cheshire SK11 8LF

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Macclesfield College was inspected in November 2023. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision as requires 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.

Macclesfield College is a small general further education college located in Macclesfield, Cheshire. The college has one main site that serves the town of Macclesfield and the surrounding areas. Macclesfield College provides a range of vocational and higher education courses, as well as apprenticeships. The college is a partner of the Cheshire and Warrington Institute of Technology.

At the time of the monitoring visit, Macclesfield College had 1,143 students on education programmes for young people studying a range of vocational courses at levels 1 to 3, including T levels. Just under half of the students study courses at level 3. There were 574 adult students studying at levels 1 to 5.

There were 592 apprentices studying apprenticeships at levels 2 to 5. The college received high needs funding for 78 students. Of these, there were 19 students enrolled on the pathways programme to develop the skills they need for future study, work, and independence. The remainder studied a range of vocational courses at levels 1 to 3.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that students on education programmes for young people attend their lessons regularly?

Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, leaders have made a range of improvements to enable them to track and monitor students' attendance more closely. They now have a more accurate oversight of the attendance of young people.

Leaders have appointed new course, and programme leads to implement attendance strategies that are tailored to their provision. Course and programme leads use attendance trackers to identify student absences quickly. They agree and plan appropriate interventions with teachers for students who have low attendance.

Leaders liaise more closely with students' parents, carers, and guardians. Around 80% of parents, carers and guardians now use an online portal to review the attendance of their young person. They now receive an automated text message when a student is absent from a lesson.

Leaders and managers are mindful of the challenges that some young people experience that may hinder positive attendance. Most students with very low attendance at school have improved their attendance at college. Of the small number of students with high needs who had very low school attendance, there is an improving picture in their college attendance which is, in many cases, higher than school attendance but still lower than leaders' expectations.

Leaders' and teachers' focus on improving students' attendance has helped to slightly improve overall attendance for young people. For some curriculum areas, including public services, automotive, childcare, and professional construction, there has been a significant increase in attendance. However, leaders recognise that while improving, young people's attendance to construction trades, English and mathematics lessons is still too low. The number of young people studying English and mathematics has increased substantially. Leaders' focus on improving attendance continues to be a key priority.

How much progress have leaders made in strengthening quality assurance and improvement processes to rapidly improve the quality of education for young people?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have appointed a quality team to lead on improvements to the quality of education for young people. They use a range of activities, including observations of taught sessions and student feedback, to monitor and track performance and students' progress more effectively.

Leaders use information from observations to provide targeted professional development activities for staff who need to improve the quality of their teaching. Teachers benefit from professional development activities that are subject specific and tailored to the individual. This is now making a difference to how teachers plan learning and teach their students. Teachers who teach automotive are trained in the use of automatic driving equipment. They teach students how automated technology is used in vehicles to detect and respond to driver errors.

Leaders have invested in expertise to improve the teaching of English and mathematics. They have appointed a new head of department for English and mathematics. Teachers of vocational subjects jointly plan the teaching of English and mathematical concepts with English and mathematics specialists. Teachers who teach photography now teach students about real-world budgeting, such as how to calculate gallery and equipment fees and factor the depreciation of equipment. This ensures that students can profit from their art.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have ensured that most young people complete their courses. The number of students studying English and mathematics qualifications has doubled. Most students now achieve their English and mathematics qualifications.

Teachers complete work scrutiny across departments to identify good practice in marking and feedback. While teachers plan to use shared practice to further improve their own teaching, it is too early to see the impact of this.

How much progress have leaders and teachers made in improving the use of education, health, and care (EHC) plans for students with high needs to ensure that they make swift progress towards achieving these outcomes as part of their curriculums? Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, leaders and staff have implemented a range of improvements to their documentation and processes. They have introduced a new EHC plan outcome document for each student. This ensures that teachers and support staff can access individual student outcomes swiftly.

Leaders have invested in recruiting lead learning facilitators to provide additional support and guidance for staff. Leaders provide appropriate training for staff to make sure that they understand and follow new processes. New staff now receive a more comprehensive induction. Teachers are now involved fully in reviewing students' outcomes.

Teachers and support staff routinely and accurately record students' progress towards the outcomes outlined in their EHC plans. Students make progress towards achieving most of their EHC plan targets. They develop their independence skills, making decisions for themselves, and building their confidence and self-esteem. Students explain clearly how they use strategies to self-regulate their emotions when angry or anxious successfully. However, a few students struggle to achieve their English and mathematics qualifications.

Leaders have appointed an additional EHC plan learning mentor. This has increased leaders' capacity to provide one-to-one tours, transition meetings, and taster sessions for prospective students in a more timely manner.

Leaders have revised the curriculum to provide a wider range of subjects. Students with high needs can now study health and social care, construction multi-skills and art. These subjects provide students with wider career choices.

Leaders plan to make further improvements to how they record students' progress and achievement for non-accredited qualifications. This includes the piloting of a digital application to enable teachers and support staff to maximise the time that

they spend supporting students. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these actions.

How much progress have leaders and teachers made to improve the planning and teaching of the curriculums for students on education programmes for young people? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders respond to local skills improvement priorities. They have taken the strategic decision in response to the local skills strategy to cease their offer of some courses.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have strengthened the planning and teaching of education programmes for young people. Curriculum staff work with employers to plan their courses. This ensures that students are taught the skills needed for employment. Leaders now use rigorous quality assurance processes to check that courses include planned opportunities to improve students' English and mathematics skills and that assessments are planned well.

Teachers are experts in the subjects that they teach. Many have extensive industry experience. Teachers use their subject expertise to bring learning to life. Most teachers help students to make clear connections between theory and practical application. Students studying public services explain confidently how different uniformed services would use drill and marching for ceremonial occasions and commemorations, such as the recent Holocaust memorial services.

Most teachers use a range of assessment methods effectively to check on learning and to plan and adapt teaching. They use probing questions to help students to reflect on what they know and deepen their subject knowledge. However, in a few lessons teachers' questioning is superficial and does not provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate what they know or to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Teachers occasionally move on to the next topic too quickly, without the assurance that students have a thorough understanding of what they have been taught.

Most teachers identify and correct students' misconceptions swiftly. Where students studying T-level design, planning and surveying struggle with challenging work around the use of horizon and eyeline when drawing three-dimensional perspectives from two-dimensional planning documents, teachers ensure that they understand their mistakes and can rectify them quickly.

How much progress have leaders and teachers made to ensure that the starting points of students on education programmes for young people are used effectively to plan learning? **Reasonable progress**

Teachers have improved how they use information about what young students already know and can do to inform their teaching. Teachers use a range of information, including student self-assessment, to ensure that students begin their

studies on the right course and level. Students complete subject-specific initial assessments that teachers use to inform their planning and teaching. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, students complete a skills scan at the start of their course. This helps teachers to identify knowledge and skills that students already possess as many students work in salons. Where students are competent in skills such as blow drying or completing manicures, they progress directly to working with clients rather than practising skills on their peers.

Leaders ensure that all students complete initial assessments to assess the subject-specific English and mathematical knowledge and skills that students will need. Teachers use information from these assessments to identify any knowledge and skills gaps that students may have. They then teach students the specific English and mathematics that they need. In construction, students are taught key terminology used in carpentry and joinery, bricklaying, and multi-trade skills. They are taught how to use millimetres to take accurate measurements.

Teachers use information about the starting points of young students with high needs to plan learning effectively. Students complete initial assessments that are tailored to the knowledge and skills that they need. Teachers ensure that each student's individual needs now align with their EHC plan outcomes.

Leaders now ensure that teachers plan assessments effectively. Teachers use the information from students' assessments to identify and revisit any gaps in learning. This has enabled students to be better prepared for their final assessments and examinations. However, it is too early to ascertain the impact of these actions on students' achievement and the attainment of high grades.

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