

Greenwich Community College

Follow up re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the third re-inspection monitoring visit to Greenwich Community College following publication of the inspection report on 17 December 2014, which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

Themes

The Principal and governing body must fully recognise, and take decisive action to improve quickly, years of college under-performance.

Governors, the Principal and senior managers have now established robust and effective procedures to monitor and improve the standards of learning and student achievements. Action plans for improvement are unequivocal and have been communicated effectively to all staff. In-year targets are challenging and most staff are positive about the recent and fundamental changes which have led to improved ways of working. While staff recognise that much work remains to be done to improve inadequate areas, overall, the significant and carefully-planned changes that have taken place over the past six months have been particularly well managed and have ensured that reasonable progress is being made on all the recommendations from the previous inspection.

Reasonable improvement for learners

Ensure that managers and teachers are held accountable for every aspect of students' performance.

Lines of accountability for students' successes and failures are now much clearer and better understood. Staff at all levels have a good understanding of student performance.

Many changes designed to improve students' attendance and retention are now in place. However, due to historic weak practice improvements to in-year student performance remain modest. Managers forecast that the college will achieve a modest improvement in success rates that is mainly attributed to the expectation that many more of the students who have remained on course will achieve their qualifications.

The tracking of students' progress has been much improved and students have a greater understanding of what they need to do to succeed. Those students currently on programme who wish to proceed to higher levels of study at the college understand fully that, in order to do so, they have to succeed in all parts of their programme.

Plans for the start of the next academic year, in particular for students aged 16 to 18, are intended to ensure that all students are on the right course at the right level. A detailed three-week induction programme will test and assess students' abilities and ensure that students fully understand the demands and expectations of the course, and teachers will have opportunities to confirm whether students are capable of succeeding. These new procedures are welcomed and well understood by teachers, who recognise the need for greater scrutiny of students' prior attainments and abilities in the drive to improve their chances of succeeding.

Reasonable improvement for learners

Make sure all teachers raise aspirations by providing lively teaching that motivates students.

Since March of this year, progress towards improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, although standards are not yet high enough. A more robust observation of teaching process has been fully established and is linked well to useful support arrangements to enable teachers to make further improvements and share best practice. Teachers are gaining confidence and most are making steady progress. Weak practice has virtually been eliminated. However, as a consequence of improving standards, a small number of courses/students have been adversely affected by changes to teaching staff. Students recognise some of the improvements that have taken place during the year, for example the much closer monitoring of their progress, the setting of timely targets to get them to exceed initial expected qualification grades, and better assessment practices.

Reasonable improvement for learners

Improve students' results in mathematics and English qualifications.

Progress has been good. Success rates for mathematics and English are predicted by the college to improve significantly from the very low results of 2014/15. The proportion of English teachers judged good or better by college observers is high; although, in mathematics, the standards of teaching require further improvement. Further training and better resources enable teachers to relate mathematics and English more appropriately to vocational subjects. As a result, more teachers now have the confidence to integrate these subjects into their vocational lessons. For example, a hairdressing teacher is improving students' understanding through the improved use of applied mathematics and English exercises at the start of many lessons.

Through observations of teaching and learning, managers have instructed a number of teachers to improve their own levels of English through the achievement of a level 2 qualification.

Reasonable improvement for learners

Implement the full requirements of study programmes by working with employers and other partners

Managers have well established plans to introduce a work-placement strategy for all students aged 16 to 18 on courses at levels 2 and 3 at the start of the next academic year. To this end, staff have additional resources to improve relationships with employers and partner organisations and create work-placement opportunities for students. Curriculum staff have identified suitable activities to allow students opportunities to research and improve their knowledge whilst on placement. All placements are planned to be completed within the first term. Progress towards gaining sufficient placements is satisfactory.

Reasonable improvement for learners

Make better use of, and critically analyse, data at all levels to improve student performance.

The use of data by governors, managers and staff is now widespread. Timely and accurate data now form the basis for managers' regular and effective monitoring of performance. Senior managers use regular programme quality-monitoring meetings with curriculum managers to track student progress well. Managers maintain a realistic outlook on improvements to date and, based upon data analysis and the quality of teaching and learning, rightly judge that outcomes for learners continue to be inadequate.

Reasonable improvement for learners

Develop a plan that identifies and delivers an appropriate curriculum.

Governors and senior managers have rightly focused their primary efforts on improving the quality of existing programmes before introducing new courses. However, communication and working relationships between the college, employers and partners are being further developed and improved upon. The apprenticeship programme has been subject to much review and improvement and managers are in the throes of cautiously introducing a small cohort of learners in specific areas where the college feels it has the appropriate resources for learners to be successful, for example in aspects of the construction crafts. Where the college is not sufficiently confident that it has the appropriate expertise, it is working appropriately with other training partners to fulfil local employment needs.

Reasonable improvement for learners

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