

North East Worcestershire College

Focused monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 130713

Name of lead inspector: Lindsay Hebditch HMI

Last day of inspection: 28 September 2011

Type of provider: General further education college

Address: Peakman Street
Redditch
Worcestershire
B98 8DW

Telephone number: 01527 570020

FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

North East Worcestershire College is a large general further education college with a large campus in Redditch and a second campus in Bromsgrove. This year the college has enrolled around 8,000 learners; approximately 57% of these are adults and 65% are female. Some 11% of learners are from minority ethnic groups which is higher than the figure for these groups in Worcestershire. The college offers courses in nearly all subject areas and the majority of learners follow intermediate-level courses. The college also provides employment-based training in seven subjects. The social and economic environment is favourable although areas of deprivation exist, particularly in Redditch. The unemployment rate in Redditch is slightly higher than the national figure.

The most recent inspection report was published in July 2010. The college was judged to be good in overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management. Of the four subject areas inspected, two were judged to be good and two were satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How much progress has been made in using quality assurance systems more effectively?

Reasonable progress

Following the recent staff reorganisation the quality improvement team has been given increased responsibility and clearer lines of accountability. The team has worked effectively to ensure that self-assessment procedures are understood clearly and implemented correctly. Teaching staff have received training to ensure that at programme level their evaluations are accurate and rigorous. Self-assessment is now better informed by the views of students and employers. The new quality reviews form a valuable resource which enables managers to understand the underlying reasons for unsatisfactory performance. The reports from these reviews are informed by more accurate and more readily understood data, which help staff to measure progress against key performance indicators, including of the quality of teaching, and provide a good basis for self-assessment. At the time of the visit, the college was finalising its self-assessment report for 2010/11. Provisional grades within this report reflect appropriately the current college performance data and the information contained in the quality reports.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving learners' outcomes since the last inspection?

Insufficient progress

Since the last inspection the college has addressed issues concerning the accuracy and reliability of data on learners' achievements. Managers now have an accurate knowledge of learners' outcomes but have yet to deal with the legacy of data inaccuracies which served to conceal a decline in success rates on long courses for learners aged 16 to 18 and for adult learners. In some subject areas the decline has resulted from falling retention rates and in others declining achievement rates. The college is aware that the low success rates on advanced-level courses represent a particularly significant weakness and have resulted from both declining retention and achievement rates. The low value-added scores in the majority of AS- and A-level subjects indicate that these learners are not making as much progress as they should. The proportion of learners who achieve high grades has increased, but remains low. Outcomes for work-based learners are much improved. Apprentices now achieve success rates that are well above average, including for those who achieve their qualifications within the specified timescale, while success rates for Train to Gain learners are slightly above average. Learners' attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in helping to ensure that teaching addresses the needs of all learners?

Reasonable progress

The college's previous lesson observations provided an over-optimistic assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. The revised observation scheme, based on observations of all teaching staff, provides a profile of grades which is much lower but more consistent with learners' outcomes. The college has been able to identify areas where there is a clear correlation between teaching which is less satisfactory and low success rates, and has therefore been able to plan sensible and well-targeted actions for improvement. Although it is too early to assess the impact of these changes there are clear and encouraging signs that teachers have accepted the need to improve the quality of their teaching and are planning their activities more thoroughly, although currently they give insufficient attention to the development of learners' literacy and numeracy. At the time of this visit, the college's own analysis and the comments of learners confirmed that variations in the quality of teaching within and between subject areas persist, but are diminishing.

What progress has been made in the use of targets to support individual learners' progress and achievement?

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection the college has placed a greater emphasis on target setting for learners. Senior managers were aware that the targets set were not effective in helping the college to achieve sufficient improvement in learners' outcomes and

provided training to help staff understand how to set and agree challenging targets with individual learners. The revised tutorial programme now provides teachers and learners with more opportunities to meet to discuss progress, and learners receive targets which are clearly based on their own abilities and learning needs. The college has increased the number of staff available to support learners' personal development needs and early indications show that their well-chosen interventions and careful selection of short-term targets are helping learners to improve their attendance and punctuality.

How much progress has the college made in improving the opportunities available to learners through its cross-college enrichment programme?

Significant progress

The college has raised the profile of cross-college enrichment by providing a greater range of activities and publicising them more widely. Learners have become increasingly involved in developing and supporting cross-college enrichment. Participation in sports and recreational events has improved at both main sites; learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who follow programmes in English for speakers of other languages participate well. The development of volunteering has been a strong feature since the last inspection and provides the college with an excellent foundation to extend its community work. The college recognises that it must evaluate its cross-college enrichment activities more fully if it is to maximise their potential benefit to all learners.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in promoting equality and diversity consistently through the college?

Significant progress

The college has given a high priority to equality and diversity through its strong programme of staff training and more effective monitoring of the promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum. Lesson observations have been used well to gauge progress and identify areas of good practice or where opportunities to promote equality have been missed. In work-based learning the promotion of equality and diversity during learners' reviews has been much improved by the use of workplace scenarios to prompt discussion and reflection. The most recent performance data indicate that there are no significant differences in the progress made by different groups of learners. Learners demonstrate good knowledge of equality and diversity issues and confirm that these issues are promoted well in the college.

What progress has been made in increasing the accommodation which is available for teaching?

Significant progress

The college has made major improvements to its accommodation since the last inspection. In Redditch the college has opened a new block for adult education and professional studies and extended further its impressive provision in construction. The cramped accommodation in hairdressing noted in the last inspection report has been improved by the provision of two additional salons. In Bromsgrove a building extension now provides spacious and well-resourced accommodation for media arts and motor vehicle engineering. Internal refurbishment in Bromsgrove has increased the space available for learners to study, rehearse and use computers.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231 or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk