

Carshalton College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 130455

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Last day of inspection: 29 September 2011

Type of provider: General further education college

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Re-inspection Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

Carshalton College is a medium-sized general further education college based on one site in Sutton, south London. Sutton is a relatively prosperous area, but it does contain some pockets of deprivation. The college attracts learners primarily from the boroughs of Sutton, Merton and Croydon and offers a vocational curriculum. Learners study courses in ten subject areas, and apprenticeships are provided in most of these areas. Courses range from pre-entry to advanced and, in some cases, degree level. The areas with the highest numbers of learners are health, social care and early years, engineering and foundation for learning and life.

The college was last inspected in March 2011. Overall effectiveness, outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management were all judged to be satisfactory. Of the four subject areas inspected, one was judged to be good, two were satisfactory, but information and communication technology (ICT) was judged inadequate.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in ensuring quality assurance procedures are applied consistently across the provision to secure improvements? **Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection, the process for progress reviews has been well established and has begun to have a positive impact on the quality of provision. The monthly progress reviews are well informed by thorough course reviews that highlight good practices and underperformance in curriculum areas. The use of colour coding visually identifies areas in need of support across a range of performance indicators. Progress reviews are now shared with all curriculum managers and staff for easy recognition of performance. Staff have started to use this information well to share good practices and support each other to ensure improvements for students.

Stringent targets are now set for each performance indicator and demonstrate clearly the steady improvements across most curriculum areas. However, the process also highlights that some areas are not improving as fast as others. There is clear recognition that more work is needed to apply quality assurance procedures consistently to ensure rapid improvements. This includes specific aspects such as the quality of teaching and learning and student attendance which remain too variable across the provision.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving students' outcomes?

**Reasonable
progress**

College data suggest that headline success rates improved in 2010/11 at all levels of long courses for those aged 19 and over. Most notably, level 1 courses improved by 21 percentage points. This follows prompt actions taken to rectify the low outcomes on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and foundation courses identified at inspection through better programme planning. For students aged 16 to 18, 2010/11 college data indicate that overall success rates on level 1 courses improved by 10 percentage points, but only rose slightly at level 3 from a low 76% in 2009/10. Retention on these courses has remained static and the college recognises the urgent need to remedy this. College data show particularly good improvements to outcomes in five subject areas in 2010/11. However, success rates have declined in three areas, in particular retail and commercial enterprise which dropped by 9 percentage points.

Framework completions on apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships remain variable. Current data suggest some areas have improved slightly whilst others have declined. The gaps between groups of learners from minority ethnic groups identified at the last inspection have closed through initiatives such as better promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum. Overall success rates for Train to Gain remain around average.

Quality of provision

How much progress has the college made in improving the provision for students studying information and communication technology (ICT), an area judged to be inadequate at the last inspection?

**Significant
progress**

Managers and teachers have worked hard to improve the provision in information and communication technology (ICT). Both retention and attendance have improved considerably since the last inspection through more assiduous follow up of absences and purposeful monitoring of student progress in tutorials. Better recognition of students' individual support requirements has led to more students receiving additional learning support. Communications between teachers and support staff have also improved. College data for 2010/11 show that success rates for long courses have improved by 21 percentage points.

Electronic personal learning plans (PLPs) are of a good standard and demonstrate ample evidence of specific and measurable targets being set and monitored. The management of ICT has improved and following the last inspection ICT staff have been given good support to improve teaching, learning and assessment. They have all completed a variety of in-house training modules. Managers recognise that there is still work to be done to further improve the planning of lesson activities to continuously challenge and develop more able students.

What progress has been made in improving attendance and punctuality across the provision?

**Reasonable
progress**

Appropriate action has been taken to improve attendance and punctuality across the college following inspection. This includes ensuring staff are clearer about their roles and responsibilities in tackling poor performance. An information leaflet has recently been introduced to guide staff on how to deal with persistently poor attendance and punctuality. The restructuring of the functional skills and ESOL programmes were deliberate strategies to improve persistently poor attendance and punctuality in these areas. This has begun to secure improvements. Incentive schemes have been introduced to reward students who make good efforts to attend. Individual tutorials are better focused on discussions around attendance and clearer use is made of learners' electronic personal learning plans to identify attendance patterns. Staff routinely telephone or text those who are absent. Student services staff now take a more proactive role in supporting students who are deemed at risk of poor attendance and punctuality. However, the impact of these initiatives has been inconsistent. College data for 2010/11 indicate slight improvements to overall college attendance, although attendance in functional skills classes remains low in many subject areas. There continue to be inconsistencies in the way that staff deal with poor punctuality across curriculum areas.

Leadership and management

What progress has the college made in improving the quality of teaching, training and assessment through the use of lesson observations and staff development?

**Reasonable
progress**

The lesson observation scheme has been improved and formal graded lesson observations are carried out by eight senior managers across the college. Previously, lesson observation grades have been too generous and inconsistent. By using a smaller team of experienced observers, the consistency of grading has improved. Teaching and learning observation records show that, in the main, the grades are justified by evidence in the text. However, in some, records are over long and descriptive and insufficient weight is given to the learning judgements. Ungraded peer and developmental observations within curriculum teams are well established and make a good contribution to maintaining standards and providing specific opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice in order to improve outcomes for learners.

College managers have introduced well-developed in-house training and development modules and activities for teachers to improve their teaching and learning. For example, teachers are now encouraged to reflect on their responses to challenging or disruptive behaviour by students. A high proportion of staff have completed this training and felt it improved their practice. There has been an appropriate focus on embedding equality and diversity in lessons and more attention has been given to the quality of learning.

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