

Central Bedfordshire College

Safeguarding reinspection and reinspection monitoring visit report

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Introduction

Central Bedfordshire College is a medium-sized general further education college with its main site in Dunstable town centre. Other college sites are located in Luton, Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard. The college's core business is vocational education. The college offers provision in 14 subject areas. Most learners study advanced level programmes. The college provides a range of programmes for learners aged 14 to 16. It offers apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in six areas. Since the previous inspection, the college has significantly changed its management structures. These were about to become fully operational at the time of this inspection.

The outcome of the reinspection is as follows:

| Aspect of the common inspection framework | Original grade | Reinspection grade |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Safeguarding | 4 | 3 |

Context

1. At the previous full inspection of the college, in November 2011, overall effectiveness was judged to be satisfactory. Outcomes, quality of provision, leadership and management, capacity to improve and equality and diversity were satisfactory, but safeguarding was inadequate. Of the four subject areas inspected, one was judged good, two satisfactory and information and communication technology was judged inadequate. Safeguarding was inadequate because the college did not fully meet government requirements in relation to its single central register for safeguarding.
2. The purpose of this inspection is to reinspect and report on safeguarding and to explore the additional themes as listed below.

Key findings

- The college responded promptly and well to the deficiencies in safeguarding raised at the previous inspection. The principal and governors have not only addressed the specific shortcomings identified, but have also taken the opportunity to thoroughly review the effectiveness of all safeguarding arrangements.
- The leadership and management of safeguarding now proactively tests the rigour of safeguarding and the extent of compliance. Governors now very effectively monitor safeguarding policies and their implementation. They have good expertise in safeguarding. A governor, particularly experienced in safeguarding, now takes the lead for the board.
- The management of safeguarding is clear and effective. Roles and responsibilities are well defined. The recently formed safeguarding committee, chaired by the principal, meets termly. Its members include the senior

safeguarding officer and the governor with responsibility for safeguarding. The committee reports to the board of governors and to the quality and standards committee of the board.

- Safeguarding is fully integrated into the newly developed management structures. One of the new assistant principals will be the senior safeguarding officer. Currently, to help ensure compliance with safeguarding, the senior management team considers updates to the single safeguarding register at each of its fortnightly meetings.
- As the previous inspection recognised, the college does well in identifying and responding to issues around child protection and the safeguarding of vulnerable adults. Liaison with partner agencies concerned with safeguarding is good.
- The single safeguarding register provides a comprehensive and reliable statement of all checks carried out on employed staff, governors, learners on placements, volunteers and any other key categories. Staff now initiate paperwork for criminal records bureau (CRB) checks at interview, to help avoid delays in employment. If CRB check outcomes are awaited, risk assessments are used.
- The college has carefully checked and considered its compliance with safeguarding regulations and wider aspects of the safeguarding of learners. Through an internal audit of its safeguarding compliance and an independent inspection of safeguarding arrangements it is clear on the progress it has made and what further it needs to do.
- Appropriate staff training has accompanied the college's drive to improve safeguarding. All staff and governors are required to complete level 1 on-line training by the end of the summer term 2012. Many have already done so, but not all.
- Learners continue to feel safe in the college. They comment positively on the supportive and safe community of the college. Teachers pay close attention to their safety. Health and safety in lessons is good. Learners understanding of aspects of e-safety is often sound, but requires further development.
- The college plans to further secure the main college site by the introduction of a single point of entry, to be used in conjunction with ID badges. The current use of ID badges is increasing, but is not yet sufficiently enforced.

What does Central Bedfordshire College need to do to improve further?

- Fully secure the college site, agreed for the start of the new academic year, by the creation of one point of entry to the college. Ensure that total compliance with the use of ID cards accompanies this.
- To increase the safeguarding of learners, develop more fully their understanding of e-safety, through implementation of the actions identified in the college's action plan for improvement.
- To meet legal requirements, ensure that all staff and governors complete the level 1 safeguarding training speedily and by the final date set by the college.

Additional Themes

Inspectors explored the following themes as part of this reinspection monitoring visit.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has the college made in improving self-assessment and action planning since the previous inspection?

**Reasonable
progress**

At the previous inspection, aspects of quality assurance and self-assessment lacked rigour. The inspection noted that the college had identified this and that quality assurance and self-assessment were in 'transition' as the college started to upgrade its capacity to improve and monitor quality.

Since then, the college has continued its work to review and sharpen quality assurance, whilst carefully planning and introducing well conceived new management arrangements, with quality improvement at their core. It identified that under old structures a damaging separation between senior managers and learners existed, with no effective system to address issues comprehensively and consistently for improvement across the college.

The new management structures are about to be fully implemented. They introduce 16 learning area managers (LAMS), for particular groupings of courses, responsible to assistant principals. The process of recruiting assistant principals and LAMS has been rigorous. LAMS will lead on the college's priorities to improve learners' success, progression and satisfaction. Those in post have already started work to improve approaches to course review and self-assessment.

The college's action planning for improvement is increasingly robust, with a significant contribution from the quality and standards committee of governors, who review and sharpen actions for improvement and anticipated outcomes. The quality improvement action plan addresses all key areas for improvement, including those from inspection. It is evident that it is a working document and is updated to reflect progress or further actions considered necessary.

Outcomes for learners

What progress is being made to implement actions to improve learners' outcomes?

**Reasonable
progress**

Outcomes for learners were satisfactory at the previous inspection. Success rates were high for adult learners and satisfactory for learners age 16 to 18 and for work-based learners. The previous inspection noted that a new quality team was developing processes to target improvements for learners and learning.

Since then, the new management arrangements have created a promising environment to improve learners' outcome further. Learner improvement is fully accepted as the primary function of the college. The college's enhanced action plan for improvement recognises the need to increase the success rates of particular levels and groups of learners. Actions for improvement focus on matching courses to learners' needs and improving teaching and learning.

Since the previous inspection, in the current academic year, the overall retention of learners, based on college data, has remained high, at 93%. The college has worked hard to improve learners' attendance overall and to improve consistency in attendance between subject areas. College data show that overall attendance at May 2012, at 84%, is five percentage points above that at May 2011.

The college's consideration of the performance of different groups of learners was not comprehensive at the previous inspection. This is improved and trends are increasingly well identified and acted upon. The college's action plan for improvement deals with this aspect fully and charts the college's progress well.

Quality of provision

What progress is being made to improve the rigour of the college's lesson observation scheme?

Reasonable progress

Teaching and learning were satisfactory at the previous inspection, but with too much variation in the quality of lessons. The lesson observation process lacked rigour and did not clearly identify areas for improvement.

An improved lesson observation programme started this year. Supported by a software package, it readily captures and analyses evidence for improvement. All observers are well trained and have a better understanding of the quality of teaching and learning judgements they need to make. Arrangements now provide observers with detailed information on specific themes and aspects of teaching and learning they need to consider. The grading of lessons is more rigorous and consistent across the team. In joint lesson observations, inspectors agreed with the judgements made by the college's observers.

Outcomes from observations provide evidence for more consistent approaches to dealing with areas for improvement. Useful reports provide teachers with a clear appreciation of their performance against a wide range of objectives and a comprehensive awareness of how they can improve. Managers use them to inform staff development and monitor improvements. It is too early to judge fully the impact on learners but early indications are highly encouraging.

Aspects of equality and diversity are included in lesson plans, but it is not always clear how they should be promoted or contextualised during lessons.

Leadership and management

What progress is being made to improve the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT)?

**Reasonable
progress**

The management and delivery of ICT provision is in the process of significant and well-managed change. It has received particular attention because of its inadequacy at the previous inspection and within the context of the college's overall management changes.

Aspects of the provision are improving. New, college-wide attendance and punctuality procedures have been successfully introduced in the area. Specific learner outcome targets are now set and monitored appropriately. Current in-year retention is higher than the same time last year and indicates that recent initiatives may have a positive impact on learners' success rates.

Improvements to the lesson observation process and learners' progress monitoring allow teachers to better identify individual needs and adopt a more learner-focused approach to teaching and assessment. The revised internal verification and assessment processes are now systematic. Tutorial arrangements have improved for most learners and focus on specific, relevant topics. Learners are positive about the support they receive from tutors.

Subject sector action plans for improvement are included in the wider college action plan that has clear improvement targets and planned completion dates. Progress against actions is monitored more effectively. The development of appropriate work experience opportunities for learners and wider links with local employers is slow.

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