Norton Radstock 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 Norton Radstock College following publication of the inspection report on 23 June 2014, which judged that the college was inadequate. The major areas for improvement related to inadequate leadership and management, the slow rate of improvement since the previous inspection, teaching, learning and assessment that required improvement, poor progress and progression of students, and the poor development of students' competence in English and mathematics.

Reinspection monitoring visits took place in July and October 2014. Following the first visit in July, a published report clearly identified key strategies that would help contribute to improvement. At the monitoring visit in October, inspectors found that the college had made insufficient progress for learners against many of the areas they explored. This visit has explored the progress that governors, senior managers and staff have made in raising the quality of provision at the college since October.

Themes

What actions have governors taken to support and challenge senior leaders, to build the capacity of the senior team and to increase the focus and momentum on raising standards?

Significant improvement for learners

Since the last monitoring visit, governors and senior leaders have made good progress to improve quality and put strategies in place to implement the recommendations made following previous visits. As a result, the college is making significant progress in raising standards.

Governors have reviewed their membership and appointed a new Chair of the Corporation. They have also overseen significant changes to the senior leadership and curriculum management teams, including the retirement of the previous Principal and the appointment of an interim Principal and Vice Principal. The senior team has also successfully secured the services of a suitably experienced curriculum manager for English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision.

Governors have successfully appointed an experienced new member of the board who has significant financial expertise to support and review the financial status of the college. Governors have also carefully reviewed the longer-term strategic options for the college, in anticipation of a proposed merger with another college.

Governors have significantly improved the processes by which they receive information and review quality improvement. They now have appropriate systems in
place to hold all senior and curriculum managers to account for driving improvement. Governors provide good professional challenge and support to managers, setting clear targets and expectations for quality improvement. Governors regularly visit the college, find out first-hand about the activities around the college and ask probing questions about the quality of provision.

All these changes to governance, leadership and management have enabled the college to move forwards with much greater urgency and momentum.

**How much progress has the college made in developing an action plan that addresses the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report?**

**Significant improvement for learners**

The governing body and senior team now have a clear and detailed improvement action plan in place that includes a comprehensive set of priorities, as well as suitable timescales, expectations and accountabilities to drive improvement. Governors and senior leaders monitor the progress of the action plan regularly. They receive concise and unambiguous reports that clearly show where they are making progress and highlight those areas where further action is required to increase the rate of improvement. Managers have access to timely data and are now making sound judgements on the progress of the college’s action plan using a range of reliable information.

**What plans are in place and what action has been taken to improve performance management arrangements?**

**Reasonable improvement for learners**

All staff responsible for teaching and learning now have suitable appraisals and professional development plans in place. They understand much better the links between lesson observation, performance review and quality improvement. Managers are successfully reducing areas of under-performance and enabling teachers to improve their teaching and assessment.

**What impact are the improvement and staff development activities having on raising the quality of provision, and how are governors and managers assessing this progress?**

**Reasonable improvement for learners**

Senior managers have improved the effectiveness of staff development activities. They have prioritised events that target those areas that tackle the weaker aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. Attendance at staff development events is now mandatory, and teachers are clear about the college’s expectations that they must undertake relevant professional development. Suitable support systems are in place to mentor individual teachers who are new to post, or who require support to improve their practice.
Governors, senior managers and other staff have visited other colleges to identify models of good practice and implement them within the college. Senior managers have created suitable opportunities for celebrating success and sharing best practice within the college. This has helped to motivate staff and increase the resolve of teachers to improve teaching and learning across the college.

**Summary**

Through regular and effective quality monitoring processes, governors and senior managers are now able to check accurately the progress the college is making in improving the quality of provision. The broad range of initiatives put in place is having a positive impact in raising standards.
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