

Barnfield College

Follow up re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: General further education college

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the second re-inspection monitoring visit to Barnfield College following publication of the inspection report on 8 January 2015 which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

Since the first visit, the new principal has commenced his appointment and a new vice principal for curriculum has been appointed and commenced work. The principal has reviewed and changed the management structure of the college and interviews for new posts are underway, with the intention of having the new structure populated fully by September 2015.

Themes

Improvement in learner management

- Behaviour of learners at the New Bedford Road campus has improved considerably since the November 2014 inspection. They now wear identity badges more routinely and those who do not, when challenged by staff, comply more willingly. Learners' behaviour in lessons, in social areas and in corridors is now much more orderly and respectful.
- Significant changes in several teaching teams have caused disruption to learners. Teachers who could not meet the required standards of performance have left the college or are being coached to improve. Teachers are now monitoring learners' progress more closely and those who attend lessons regularly are starting to make better progress.
- Governors now ask senior leaders for more information on the progress of learners and are confident that the information they receive is honest and reliable. As a result, they are much better informed about the performance of the college and they ask senior managers more pertinent questions about improvement actions and the impact they are having.
- Teachers are now more accountable for the attendance of their learners and they intervene more swiftly when learners fail to attend lessons. However, data show that the attendance of learners varies considerably across different subjects and that levels of attendance are not improving. Learners' attendance is high in subjects such as hospitality and catering, which is also a subject that has a very high proportion of good and outstanding teaching and learners who achieve their qualifications. Learners' attendance is low in subjects such as business management and health and social care.
- Support for learners is effective for many who experience significant challenges in their daily lives. Support staff intervene swiftly when learners fail to attend and in

the majority of cases are successful in getting learners to attend lessons more frequently. They are also able to offer financial assistance to help learners who qualify with travel costs and childcare where this is a barrier to attendance. However, a small number of learners, despite the best efforts of staff, fail to attend frequently enough.

- A new manager has been appointed to manage the apprenticeship provision at the college and, as a result of her actions to improve the recording and progress of apprentices, the in-year overall success rate has improved dramatically.
- The principal has written a new behaviour management policy and procedure, which is awaiting approval by the governors, to enable teachers and managers to manage learners, whose conduct or performance falls below the required standard, more firmly. The policy also sets high standards and aspirations for learners at the start of their course in the new learner contract.

Reasonable improvement for learners

Improvement in teaching, learning and assessment

- The new principal and vice-principal have written a new Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy, which sets out clearly the standards of teaching, learning and assessment they expect all learners to experience. This has been effective in helping to raise the standards of teaching and has also been the catalyst for several staff to leave the college.
- Training and coaching for teachers from both external trainers and the best teachers at the college are helping to improve standards of teaching, learning and assessment. External consultants have been used to observe all teachers at the college and this work shows that the proportion of lessons that are good or better has improved to about two thirds. Those teachers whose lessons have not yet been judged to be good or better are being supported to improve or are on formal capability procedures. Inspectors observed very few instances of inadequate teaching during the monitoring visit.
- Too many learners still do not attend lessons regularly. Current data show that just less than three-quarters of learners attend their lessons, although the overall data mask significant variation between different subjects. Learners who do attend regularly are frustrated by the proportion of learners who do not attend regularly and the impact that this and poor punctuality has on their learning.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not identify clearly or communicate to learners what they should be able to do by the end of the lesson. Too many lesson objectives are about task completion or the activities that the teacher has planned for the lesson. Consequently, not all learners make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not yet give all learners helpful feedback on written work which identifies what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. In the best examples, learners are able to see clearly what they have done well and this motivates them to improve the quality of their work further. Teachers' oral feedback on learners' practical work is of a higher quality than written feedback.

Reasonable improvement for learners

Improving the teaching and learning of English and mathematics in discrete classes and within subjects

- Managers recognise that teaching and learning of English and mathematics require significant improvement and they are implementing a range of actions to bring about improvement, but many of these are recent and have not had sufficient impact. A new manager, replacing others and with particular responsibility for this area, had been in post for only three weeks at the time of the visit.
- Managers have identified under-performing teaching staff and are taking firm actions to help them improve; these are not always successful and a few staff struggle to achieve the high standards now expected of them but, in the interim, they continue to teach classes. Learners complain that there have been too many changes of teachers in English and mathematics in this academic year.
- English and mathematics are no longer taught in the same session; the previously very wide mix of learners' ability in sessions has now been rationalised and the variance reduced. Learners with GCSE English or mathematics at grades A* to C are no longer required to attend, but the alternative arrangements to help them improve their English and mathematics skills further lack structure or monitoring.
- Managers' data indicate that the proportion of learners who will achieve qualifications in English and mathematics will improve significantly by the end of this academic year, largely due to concerted efforts by senior managers to ensure that students attend college, sit and pass their exams. The rate of improvement is highest in English. Data predictions show that success rates will rise in mathematics at levels 1 and 2 but will decline at entry levels. Despite managers' efforts, the number of learners not attending their booked examinations is too high in several subject areas.
- Teaching staff have received training in new systems for planning for individual learning, marking, internal verification and assessment, but these have yet to be fully or consistently implemented well by all tutors.
- The quality of teaching and learning is too variable and the proportion of teaching and learning which requires improvement or is inadequate is too high. Sessions formally observed and graded by external consultants recently featured overall judgements of outstanding through to inadequate.
- Learners' attendance at discrete English and, particularly, mathematics sessions has been and is still consistently low. The timetabling of sessions has been altered so that these lessons are now taught during the day rather than at the start or end. Managers' data identify that no teacher of English or mathematics has attendance averaging above 80% this academic year and in some cases it is as low as 25%. In one planned session observed by an inspector, attendance was zero. Learners who do not attend are now contacted more routinely by teachers, but this has had limited effect.
- Additional workshop and catch-up sessions are offered to provide coaching for learners close to exams, but learners' attendance at these is poor and this

opportunity is aimed at too many who have not been previously attending sessions or completed any work.

- Too many learners do not understand the importance of English and mathematics or the part these subjects play in completing their qualification or in employment and consequently accord them a low priority.

Insufficient improvement for learners

Improving the quality and accuracy of self-assessment

- The new senior leaders have developed action plans for the rest of the current academic year and for the start of the 2015/16 academic year to identify the actions that are required to swiftly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, outcomes for learners and the effectiveness of leadership and management. The action plans are honest and reflect clearly the priorities for improvement and what actions are needed to achieve these. Senior leaders have also identified key milestones in achieving these actions, the progress of which is being monitored closely by senior leaders and governors. Managers have made substantial progress in a short timeframe towards achieving the initial actions identified in the action plans.
- Managers have not yet produced a self-assessment report for the current academic year, or revised the one produced for 2013/14. They recognise that further work will be needed to do this at end of the academic year, but that their current priority is to enable as many learners as possible to achieve their qualifications before the end of the current academic year.
- The new principal has written a three-year development plan that identifies astutely what needs to improve and how the identified improvements will be achieved. This has been welcomed by governors and sets high ambitions for the future of the college.

Reasonable improvement for learners

Improving arrangements for work experience

- The principal has appointed a new manager with responsibility for work experience, recognising that this is an essential part of study programmes for learners aged 16-19 and also an essential part of several vocational qualifications offered by the college.
- The manager has written a new work experience policy and procedure and this is to be approved shortly by senior leaders and governors. The new procedure includes the requirement for the work experience provider and for the learner to evaluate the skills they have gained as a result of being on the placement.
- Managers' data show that just over half of learners on study programmes still have not had the benefit of a work experience placement or work in a realistic working environment, despite this being a recommendation from the inspection that took place in November 2014.

- Learners who have been on an external work experience placement know and value the skills they have developed as a result. This has helped them to understand better the link between their learning at college and how it is applied in the workplace. In a few cases, learners also understand better how important their English and mathematics skills are in the workplace.

Insufficient improvement for learners

Improvement in the collection of destination data to inform curriculum planning

- Managers have formed a working group from which revised procedures and systems have been established to capture more effectively the internal progression and intended destinations of current learners, including those studying with partners. Tutors have collected this information for the majority of learners studying in 2014/15 through progression interviews carried out in February. Managers have introduced new progression and destination documentation to inform internal progression and to ensure tutors carry out this process consistently across all subjects. The forms are pre-populated with learner information to make it easier for learners to re-enrol and continue to study at the college, for instance onto the second year of a two-year study programme.
- The new documentation records all possible destinations for all types of provision including progression onto traineeships and supported internships, although the college is not currently offering these, and there is a similar process to record destinations for apprentices as part of their individual learning plans or exit interviews.
- Staff training, such as attending the weekly principal's briefing, a user guide and managers attending team meetings, has been introduced to ensure all staff are familiar with the new procedures.
- Managers acknowledge that in previous years the use of data to inform curriculum planning and delivery was underdeveloped, but they now have a clear focus on gathering this information to ensure that they are able to evaluate accurately the effectiveness of the curriculum in enabling learners to progress to sustained employment, which meets local and regional skills needs.
- Managers need to establish fully the new systems to provide them with accurate and relevant information to plan a curriculum that meets local and regional needs. These systems are still at an early stage and need to complete a whole academic year cycle before a full data set is available and the impact seen across the whole learner journey. According to managers, the 2014/15 curriculum was planned better than in previous years and has not just been rolled forwards from the previous year.
- The new principal has worked effectively in the short time he has been in post to rebuild relationships with local and regional employers and employer groups, so that Barnfield College is seen as the provider of choice for training in the region. Governors recognise this and welcome the improving relationships and the part

this will play in rebuilding the confidence that employers have in the training provided at the college.

Reasonable improvement for learners

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