

Tresham College of Further and Higher Education

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first re-inspection monitoring visit to Tresham College of Further and Higher Education following publication of the inspection report on 10 August 2016, which found the provider to be inadequate for overall effectiveness, leadership and management, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners. Personal development, behaviour and welfare were judged to require improvement. Of the three provision types inspected, 16 to 19 study programmes and apprenticeships were judged inadequate and adult learning programmes were judged to be good.

Themes

The appropriateness of the post-inspection action plan and the quality of its monitoring and reporting arrangements, including scrutiny by governors, leaders and managers.

While the post-inspection action plan (PIAP) relates directly and appropriately to the main recommendations in the inspection report and is lengthy and detailed, it does not prioritise the key actions that, if implemented consistently and completely, will have a major impact on students' experiences and their outcomes.

The PIAP duplicates parts of the quality improvement plan and the two improvement plans will be merged. The combined action plan would benefit from a section that relates actions to their intended impact on students. Staff and managers at all levels will be responsible for implementing the actions, and this will require frequent and rigorous monitoring to embed consistency and to have a genuine impact on students. Governors and senior managers must ensure that middle managers, teachers and trainers have the skills and ambition to implement significant improvements rapidly.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that the ensuing action plan is succinct, precise and realistic and that it prioritises the most important actions that will have the greatest impact on rapidly improving the learning experiences of all students and apprentices, the progress they make and the achievements they gain.
- Implement frequent and rigorous reporting and monitoring arrangements across college, so that managers can assure governors that staff at all levels and in all parts of the college are improving students' progress and achievements.

The processes for recruiting and checking the suitability of governors.

Governors have taken prompt action to address these issues and most have produced the necessary documents to enable the appropriate checks to take place. They have produced a new policy that will, when approved by the 'search and governance' sub-committee and the full governing body, ensure that future governors will not be appointed until appropriate clearance has been obtained.

Priorities for improvement

- Complete the required checks on current governors and ensure that potential new governors undergo appropriate clearance before their appointments are confirmed.

Compliance with the study programme principles, including those for work placement.

Managers have introduced many recent strategies, facilities and posts to address this issue. Good work placement practice already exists in a minority of study areas. Since the recent inspection, managers have introduced unified cross-college systems, procedures and resources to improve students' employability skills and their awareness of the requirements of employers, as part of the work-related learning strategy. Previously, much of this was done separately and differently in study areas and was less effective than was required by the study programme principles. Managers plan that all study programme students will have appropriate work placements in accordance with the national requirements.

Staff are now responsible for checking that the placement is a worthwhile one that offers meaningful work experience, and that it complies with health and safety and insurance requirements. Teachers and managers monitor participation in work placements and their effectiveness. The new systems are centralised, open and transparent. Current information about students' placements will be available at any time using 'ProMetrix', but this system is in its infancy and is yet to be embedded fully across the college. Many of the other developments in this area are recent and it is too soon to judge the scale of their implementation or effectiveness.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure compliance with the study programme requirement for all students to have work-related experience.
- Scrutinise the uptake of students' placements to ensure that they are safe, and take action promptly to address any non-compliance with health and safety, safeguarding or insurance matters.
- Ensure rigorous monitoring of the suitability, value and effectiveness of work placements, and take action promptly to address inappropriate or poor placements.

- Ensure that all students and their staff understand thoroughly the aims and requirements for meaningful, external work placements and use the new systems to support these objectives to best effect.

The effectiveness of learning activities that meet students' and apprentices' needs and challenge them to make good progress and achieve or exceed targets.

At the recent inspection, inspectors judged that students and apprentices made slow progress. Teachers did not have sufficiently high expectations of students and did not provide lessons that challenged them sufficiently. Nor did they take sufficient account of students' existing skills and abilities when planning lessons and consequently their lessons did not meet the individual needs of students.

Managers have put in place plans to improve the extent to which staff plan effectively to meet the needs of individual students and challenge them to reach their full potential. These plans include actions to provide teachers with detailed information on students' prior attainment and their existing skills, particularly in English and mathematics. They have amended processes and schedules for lesson observations and have placed increased emphasis on planning to meet individual needs and providing students with sufficient challenge. Managers have established clear monitoring processes, which involve staff at all levels, to check that students are making at least the expected level of progress and to provide appropriate interventions to support teachers when this is not the case. It is too early to judge the full impact of these plans.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that teachers, trainers and assessors make effective use of information on students' prior attainment, in-year progress and targets to plan learning that enables all students to make the progress expected of them.
- Encourage teachers to include the use of extension activities that challenge the most able, support activities for those who are finding the work difficult and careful organisation of peer working so that students are able to benefit from each other's experience and expertise.
- Monitor students' progress through lesson observations, scrutiny of students' work and achievements against targets, so that managers and advanced practitioners intervene promptly to help teachers and assessors support students to greatest effect.
- Implement the programme monitoring board processes so that senior managers are fully informed about the progress of students in all areas of the college and intervene as necessary.

The quality of students' and apprentices' targets and how well their progress against them is reviewed and monitored; the quality of feedback given to aid students' and apprentices' progress.

During the recent inspection, target setting and action planning were ineffective for students following 16 to 19 study programmes and targets for apprentices were insufficiently clear and constructive or too general in nature. As a result, students were not challenged to excel in their studies or complete within expected timescales. Inspectors also judged the feedback given to students and apprentices to be ineffective in helping them to improve their skills.

Managers have provided training for staff to help them develop appropriate short-term targets that will enable students and apprentices to make good progress. They have revised the academic tutorial process to give students on 16 to 19 study programmes greater control over their personal targets and to enable staff to monitor progress against them.

Staff have also received training in how to provide high-quality and effective feedback. Managers have introduced a process by which advanced practitioners will scrutinise students' work to ensure that feedback is of an appropriate standard and results in students making good progress. This process will result in training and development for staff who are not providing feedback of an appropriate quality.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that teachers work with students to set individualised short-term targets that are specific and measurable and focus on the skills and behaviours that students need to develop. Ensure that staff monitor students' progress against such targets frequently.
- Implement the advanced practitioners' work scrutiny process to ensure that teachers and assessors provide feedback that results in clearly identifiable improvements in students' work.

The effectiveness of actions taken to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment using information about students' progress and from lesson observations; and the quality and effectiveness of the professional development to improve the practice of all teachers and trainers, especially those whose performance has been judged to be weak.

At the recent inspection, managers' assessment of the quality of teaching and learning was insufficiently rigorous and the standard of teaching was too variable. They found that although staff training needs were identified appropriately, teaching was not improving quickly enough.

Managers have reviewed quality improvement processes and have developed plans to focus quality improvement activities more effectively. They have modified lesson observation processes to ensure that observers focus on those aspects of lessons most likely to result in students' improved progress. Appropriate plans are in place to ensure that the outcomes of these observations are used to plan individualised staff development actions. Managers have developed an electronic system for capturing strengths and areas for development so that they can easily see where improvements need to be made and can intervene quickly. They have also introduced improved tools for monitoring students' progress against target grades and plan to focus their school review process on those subject areas most in need of improvement.

Relationships between quality monitoring and performance management processes have been strengthened, with plans for frequent meetings and reporting between curriculum managers, human resources staff and advanced practitioners, so that any areas of concern can be resolved quickly. The staff appraisal procedure now makes explicit reference to the outcomes of quality monitoring processes.

Priorities for improvement

- Implement the planned schedule of lesson observations and ensure that strengths and areas for improvement are identified accurately and focus on students and learning.
- Ensure that subsequent lesson observations pay close attention to the areas for development identified in previous observations, so that teachers apply new skills effectively and sustain improvements in their teaching.
- Use the results of lesson observations to develop a range of professional development activities that enable staff to improve their practice. Monitor the outcomes of these observations and the effectiveness of the associated staff development rigorously through the appraisal system.

The quality of the provision for improving students' English and mathematics skills, including their attendance.

While the proportion of students gaining GCSEs at grades A* to C in English increased significantly in 2015/16 compared with 2014/15, it is still less than a third. The proportion gaining these grades in mathematics reduced slightly.

Too many vocational teachers and trainers do not have the confidence and ability in their own English and mathematics skills to support their students to improve their skills.

In the most effective lessons observed in English and mathematics, teachers empathise well with their students repeating their GCSE English and mathematics. They develop good relationships with them that encourage their engagement and willingness to learn. In English lessons, teachers use challenging and enjoyable

activities such as 'Catchphrase' to involve all of their students. In mathematics lessons, teachers set work which relates to students' vocational areas and so interests them. In the less effective lessons, students disrupt and delay learning for others by arriving late, by arriving at the wrong lessons, by behaving badly and by not having the equipment needed to complete activities. Teachers talk too much at students with the result that students are not involved in the lesson and do not make progress.

Students state that not enough work is related to the real world and/or their own vocational area and that too many lessons are based on worksheets and lack a variety of activity.

Priorities for improvement

- Support and develop those vocational teachers and trainers whose knowledge of English and/or mathematics is insufficient for them to be confident about helping their own students to increase their English and/or mathematics skills.
- Improve the formation and use of students' personalised targets in English and mathematics that enable them to make good progress and ensure that progress against these targets is monitored rigorously.
- Monitor attendance, punctuality and behaviour in lessons frequently so that minor disruptions of, and delays in, learning are eradicated.
- Frequently monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including feedback in English and mathematics, to ensure that all students and apprentices receive good support and a wide range of learning activities.

Governors' knowledge of college performance and impact of their holding managers to account to drive high performance.

While the governing body has a wealth of expertise and experience in corporate matters such as estates, finance, audit, human resources and law, few governors have the necessary expertise and experience regarding the education and training matters of a general further education college. In particular, their understanding and experience of data on outcomes for learners, teaching, learning and assessment, students' target setting and curriculum are less well developed and so it is difficult for them to challenge senior managers about these matters. Governors are clear that more work is needed to improve the presentation of data and also the key findings arising from monitoring, review and quality assurance processes. They would prefer a succinct outline of the really important key issues, options to resolve them and preferred courses of actions to be implemented. In particular, governors' improved awareness of key data and how well the college is performing against national comparators is essential. Governors are keen to ensure the most appropriate managers are in place at all levels in the college, so that they can drive through the improvement actions required.

Priorities for improvement

- Improve governors' awareness and understanding of the key education and training issues that affect the college, by providing specific, realistic and measurable information and key data against which they can readily monitor progress and challenge senior managers accordingly.
- Governors should be assured that the most appropriate managers at all levels are in place and are enabled to implement actions to address the main areas for improvement arising from the recent inspection.

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