

# Tresham College of Further and Higher Education

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130771

**Name of lead inspector:** Russell Henry HMI

**Inspection date(s):** 9–10 March 2017

**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 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 to be 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**

#### **Reasonable progress**

The post-inspection action plan (PIAP) has been combined with the quality improvement plan (QIP) arising from the college's own self-assessment report (SAR). It is detailed, and includes actions that relate directly to the main recommendations in the inspection report. It now prioritises actions, and includes a section for recording the impact of completed actions.

The QIP is a working document that provides a useful framework for making improvements; it is reviewed frequently by managers. It is evident that many of the actions in the QIP are strengthening the college's provision. For example, attendance has increased by 5%, the proportion of learners leaving their courses early has decreased, and monitoring records indicate that current learners are making better progress than in previous years.

However, managers have rated the large majority of actions in the QIP as 'Urgent and Critical' and this reduces the value of prioritising them. The impact section of the action plan often does not capture fully the effect that the action has had or its impact on the progress of current learners. Governors do not have a complete understanding of the actions in the plan or their impact.

#### **The processes for recruiting and checking the suitability of governors**

#### **Significant progress**

The first re-inspection monitoring visit found that governors had completed appropriate documentation to enable Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to be carried out. The report noted that new procedures were in place to ensure that any newly recruited governors were appropriately vetted.

Since the previous monitoring visit, leaders have ensured that governors have in place up-to-date DBS checks and that these are recorded as part of the single central record. Where appropriate, for the newly appointed clerk of governors and interim principal, 'right to work' evidence has been collected and recorded.

Leaders have initiated a more rigorous governor appointment process, which includes appropriate risk assessment documentation and DBS application procedures that ensure that newly appointed governors can take up their roles safely and quickly.

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

**Significant progress**

At the time of the last visit, managers had introduced cross-college systems to improve learners' employability skills and their awareness of employers' requirements. Plans were in place to ensure that all learners following 16 to 19 study programmes would have appropriate work placements during the 2016/17 academic year, with an expectation that staff would check that each placement was safe and worthwhile. It was too soon to judge the impact of these changes.

Leaders have invested significantly in implementing a comprehensive programme of work experience across all areas of the college. A dedicated work-experience team works diligently with tutors and learners to ensure that work placements are meaningful and safe for each individual learner. To date, almost all learners either have completed their work-experience placement, or have one planned with a named employer on specific dates.

Tutors work well with employers to monitor the usefulness of work experience. They make visits and contact employers to ensure that learners make a worthwhile contribution, are safe, and get as much benefit as possible from their placement. These visits also help to develop good relationships with employers.

Most learners complete a work-placement log as one of their work-experience activities. However, only a small minority of learners who have undertaken work experience this year have completed their logbook to a standard beyond the minimum standard, despite the opportunity for them to achieve a gold, silver or bronze rating in their employability passport.

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

**Reasonable progress**

At the full inspection in 2016, inspectors judged that learners and apprentices made slow progress. Teachers did not have sufficiently high expectations of learners, and when planning lessons, did not take sufficient account of their abilities or prior learning. Apprenticeship achievement rates and value-added data from 2015/16 bear out this judgement. At the time of the first re-inspection monitoring visit, managers had put in place plans to monitor the extent to which staff planned for the individual needs of learners. These plans included actions to provide teachers with information

on learners' existing skills and prior attainment. Managers had established clear monitoring processes, but it was too early to judge their impact.

Learners now have target grades which they understand, based on their prior attainment. Where learners undertake qualifications for which no graded outcomes exist, the college uses a system of bronze, silver and gold targets to challenge learners to go beyond the minimum requirements of their course. Staff record the results of frequent assessment activities in the college's online individual learning plan (ILP) system, to which learners have access. As a result, learners understand how well they are doing. Managers and staff meet in programme monitoring boards to evaluate the progress of individual learners and groups of learners, and thus are beginning to have a clear view of the impact of their actions on learners' progress.

Managers have provided a range of staff development activities to help teachers plan lessons that provide an appropriate level of challenge for all learners. Teachers value the training they have received, and speak confidently about using the detailed information they have about learners to plan lessons that are suitably challenging for all of them. However, it was not evident from the small number of lessons observed during the monitoring visit that staff are consistently applying this approach.

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

At the time of the inspection, target-setting for apprentices and learners on 16 to 19 study programmes was ineffective. Subsequently, managers provided training for staff on developing effective short-term targets and providing high-quality and effective feedback. They had revised the academic tutorial process for 16 to 19 study programmes to give learners greater control over their targets and to allow staff to monitor progress against them more fully.

Training for staff has focused on how to write targets that are specific, measurable, relevant and time constrained. Staff speak with enthusiasm about the training they have received, and learners' ILPs show that they set and review targets on a frequent basis. Many learners confirm that they take responsibility for setting their own short-term targets, which they discuss and review with teachers. However, many of the targets seen are too vague to be of significant use to learners and apprentices. The small sample of apprentices' targets seen focus on, for example, unit completion, and do not help learners to understand how to improve specific skills and knowledge.

Advanced practitioners now complete regular scrutiny of learners' marked work to ensure that staff are providing helpful feedback. All of those staff with whom inspectors spoke during the visit had received guidance and support on the quality of their feedback. This process is beginning to lead to an increased focus on this aspect of teaching, learning and assessment. Learners increasingly find that the feedback they receive helps them improve the quality of their work and achieve higher grades.

The work scrutiny process is leading to a dialogue among staff about the most effective approaches to giving feedback, and the sharing of good practice.

Leaders and managers have access to more accurate and up-to-date data about apprentices' progress through online assessment and monitoring records. They use this information to hold assessors to account more effectively for apprentices' progress. Overall and timely achievement rates, although improved, remained below national rates in 2015/16. The college's data for current apprentices suggests a further improvement for both overall and timely achievement.

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

**Reasonable progress**

At the inspection, managers' assessment of the quality of teaching and learning was insufficiently rigorous, and consequently the standard of teaching was too variable and not improving quickly enough. Managers subsequently reviewed and amended quality improvement processes. They modified the lesson observation process to ensure that observers focused sufficiently on learners' progress; they put procedures in place to ensure that observations resulted in clear, individual professional development plans for staff; and they introduced improved methods for monitoring learners' progress. Managers now make more use of information gained from the monitoring of quality and learners' progress, to assess and improve the individual performance of staff.

Managers have implemented the revised lesson observation process. Staff are now subject to unannounced, formal, graded lesson observations and shorter unannounced 'learning walks'. Lesson observations result in personal development plans that are agreed to, and monitored by, heads of faculty. Faculty-based, advanced practitioners support staff to achieve the outcomes required by these plans.

The quality of lesson observation records is too variable. In around half of those seen, observers have focused appropriately on the progress made by learners and have identified clear areas for improvement. In the remainder, the focus is on activities completed by learners, rather than their progress, and they contain insufficient information from which a good personal development plan can be derived. Consequently, development plans are of a similarly mixed quality. Because most formal observations have been completed recently, follow-up observations have not yet taken place for those staff who need to make improvements. It is therefore too early to judge the impact of this process.

**The quality of the provision for improving learners' English and mathematical skills, and their attendance at lessons in these subjects**

**Reasonable progress**

Although the proportion of learners achieving A\* to C grades in GCSE English and mathematics is above the national rate, it is still very low. During the first re-inspection monitoring visit, inspectors found that many teachers linked English and mathematics work to learners' vocational subjects, but there were lessons in which teachers spent too much time talking, resulting in learners becoming disengaged and behaving inappropriately. Learners themselves felt that lessons were not sufficiently related to their vocational subjects and that too many lessons were based around the completion of worksheets.

Dedicated coordinators support specialists and teachers of vocational subjects well in their delivery of English and mathematics. Guidance helps teachers to improve their teaching practice, and consequently the progress that learners make. However, the impact of this remains too variable: too few teachers check learning sufficiently in lessons or ensure that all learners make the progress expected of them. The learning targets set by teachers and learners in English and mathematics are inconsistent in quality: too many targets are based solely around completion of units and qualifications, and they are insufficiently specific about what learners should do to improve.

Learners' attendance at English and mathematics sessions is now only slightly below the overall college figure; poor behaviour and minor disruptions in lessons are minimal and the large majority of learners now participate well in learning tasks.

Learners speak highly of the support and feedback they receive from teachers of English and mathematics. They indicate that teachers provide them with homework tasks that help prepare them for future lessons, revise difficult topics or extend their learning.

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

**Reasonable progress**

At the time of inspection, governors had a wealth of experience and expertise in corporate matters, but they were less well versed in teaching, learning and assessment. Their understanding of data on outcomes for learners was not sufficiently secure to enable them to challenge senior managers effectively. The information presented to governors was not helpful to them, and they described a wish to receive more succinct information related to key areas for improvement.

The governing board has been refreshed with new members since the previous monitoring visit and has a renewed focus on a proposed merger, the financial stability of the college, and most importantly, the quality of provision. Governors have overseen a significant restructure of the senior leadership team; the new team

has put middle managers in place and has established reporting structures to improve the quality of provision. A new chair of governors has introduced committees to report on finance and quality.

Senior leaders provide governors with much more succinct information on the performance of the college and governors understand this better. Governors have an increased understanding of the college's areas for improvement and challenge senior leaders with more confidence, knowing that the information they receive is accurate. They are now closely involved in the appraisal of senior leaders' performance. Governors link well with subject areas, meet with learners and consider their comments carefully. However, governors still need to develop further their understanding of the key issues around the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; on the progress made towards the completion of quality improvement actions; and on the impact these actions have on improving the quality of provision.

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