

# Barnfield College

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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**Unique reference number:** 130599

**Name of lead inspector:** Matt Vaughan HMI

**Inspection date:** 27 September 2018

**Type of provider:** General further education college

**Address:** New Bedford Road  
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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Barnfield College was inspected in January 2018. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in rectifying the four main areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The monitoring visit did not include scrutiny of the college's apprenticeships provision as the college's funding contract for the delivery of apprenticeships was terminated following the previous inspection.

The college provides full-time and part-time education across a broad range of subjects and course levels. The college has around 1,200 learners aged 16 to 19 years on study programmes, 700 adult learners and 100 learners in receipt of high-needs funding.

The local authority for Luton, Luton Borough Council, serves an area that is high in deprivation compared to that nationally. Unemployment rates and the number of people claiming benefits are higher than regional levels. The proportion of pupils aged 16 in Luton who achieve high grades at GCSE including English and mathematics is well below the national rate.

### Themes

**Do leaders have a precise understanding of the quality of all aspects of provision for learners and ensure that subsequent actions secure sustainable improvements?**      **Reasonable progress**

Since the interim principal started in post at the end of April 2018 there have been a series of actions designed to improve the quality of provision and secure a financially viable and sustainable college. This includes the implementation of a significant restructure of staffing and resources at all levels, leading to considerable financial savings. The interim principal has reorganised the leadership and management structure to increase the focus on teaching, learning and assessment.

Leaders accurately identify strengths and weaknesses of all aspects of the provision and have set about establishing revised quality-improvement and quality-assurance processes to secure improvement. This includes changes to how staff conduct the induction and assessment of learners' starting points in order to ensure that learners are placed on the right level and course from the outset of their learning. Observations of teaching and subsequent action planning have been radically revised to place an emphasis on teachers' developmental learning. Advanced learning practitioners provide coaching and support for every teacher. Leaders and managers have reorganised how staff monitor learners' progress. Clear plans are now in place

to task teachers on how they set, track and review targets with their learners. However, most revised processes are at an early stage of implementation and actions are yet to secure the intended impact. For example, some teachers are not aware of when they are expected to record the targets they have set with their learners on the college's electronic monitoring system. This makes it difficult for leaders to assess their level of challenge.

The interim principal has revised how leaders and managers are held to account for the quality of the provision they are responsible for. The performance of each curriculum area is scrutinised through a specific strategic review group that meets termly. However, these review meetings lack the specificity needed to ensure that identified weaknesses are tackled against challenging timescales. There is an absence of planning appropriate actions to bring about much-needed improvement. Further leadership scrutiny of progress against identified weaknesses is planned through the quality task group and, separately, the performance improvement group. These have been recently introduced and are yet to secure sustainable improvement.

**Do leaders ensure that teachers provide high-quality teaching across all areas of provision that enables learners to make good progress from their starting points? Reasonable progress**

The quality of teachers' practice remains too variable across the subjects and courses. As a result, not enough learners make swift progress from their starting points. However, the proportion of teaching that enables learners to make good progress has increased since the previous inspection.

Where teaching is effective, such as on some courses in childcare, motor vehicle, music and media, teachers provide demanding tasks and activities that interest learners and motivate them to work hard and improve their knowledge and skills. Teachers deploy challenging questioning techniques that successfully draw out learners' understanding and consolidate their knowledge. Teachers take into account learners' prior attainment and starting points when setting tasks. As a consequence, learners of all abilities increase their knowledge and skills. These teachers ensure that learners are given time to practise and practise again to effectively recall and apply newly learned theory to effectively solve problems. As a result, learners produce good standards of work. For example, in a mathematics GCSE lesson the teacher ensured that learners dropped their initial resistance to taking part in the activity and made rapid gains through sensitively and skilfully enabling them to solve algebraic problems. The teacher steadfastly challenged poor behaviour and successfully encouraged the learners to recognise how they could interpret the concepts of place value and expanding brackets and then apply this knowledge successfully through practice and recall.

Too often, however, learners do not make the progress of which they are capable as teaching is not pitched appropriately to their existing knowledge and learning needs. A few teachers do not know the names of their learners or have any information on their prior attainment. At times, teachers overly dominate lessons to the detriment of their learners working hard and making any progress. These teachers do not provide



curriculum to establish pathways for learners to secure high-demand employment. However, leaders accept that they have paid insufficient attention to assessing the impact of their provision to effectively plan the current curriculum. For example, there is an absence of planning to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of local employers and the enterprise partnership priorities of travel and tourism, engineering and construction. As a result, leaders do not ensure that the college's curriculum meets local skills gaps and provides learners with sufficient opportunities to learn, achieve and secure purposeful employment in local employment growth sectors.

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