

Langdon College

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

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Langdon College was inspected in December 2017. 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 main areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

Langdon College is part of the Langdon Foundation, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It is a small residential and day college with campuses in Salford and London that provide education and support primarily for 37 Jewish students who have a variety of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All students have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Leaders have established recently a new partnership for students aged 16 to 25 with a Jewish school in London. These new arrangements provide activities such as music and drama for all students who are based in London.

Themes

What progress have leaders, managers and governors made in ensuring that students achieve the progress of which they are capable, and that learning activities are appropriate for students' needs, ages and abilities?

Reasonable progress

Students make good progress towards developing sustainable personal and social skills. These help them to communicate effectively with staff, peers, visitors and the wider community. They work collaboratively and confidently together and support each other whenever possible. Students encourage each other during activities, and celebrate when their peers achieve a challenging goal. Most students make at least their expected progress over time.

Students who attended the Salford campus at the time of the previous inspection have made good progress since then in developing their confidence and their ability to work with others. Many participate in learning activities more readily than they did previously.

Students make good progress in developing their information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematical skills. Many use spreadsheets competently. Students use budgeting and money management skills effectively in their independent living skills lessons, such as when planning shopping and buying items in the supermarket.

Students benefit from appropriate additional support activities such as speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. During these sessions, they learn and develop effective strategies that help them to manage their behaviour and anxieties. Students subsequently implement these behaviour and anxiety strategies independently so that they remain focused in lessons. As a result, many students have few interruptions in their learning and make at least the progress expected of them.

Students enjoy their learning and take pride in their work. They are keen to share what they have achieved with their teachers, their peers and visitors.

Teachers plan the vast majority of lessons effectively. However, occasionally, teachers do not use students' starting points thoroughly enough to plan activities that challenge and prepare all students for their next steps. This results in a lack of challenge for the most able students. These students complete their work quickly and wait for the other students to complete the same tasks. As a result, these activities do not challenge the most able students to develop more advanced skills and knowledge. A few teachers do not routinely deploy learning support assistants effectively enough in lessons to ensure that students receive the appropriate direction and support for their activities. As a result, students become distracted and do not achieve as much as they should in their lessons.

Inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. A few teachers do not routinely write sentences in English correctly. For example, in a very small minority of lessons, they use a mixture of upper- and lower-case letters in their writing that reinforces students' errors. Consequently, students do not develop their writing skills competently enough.

Teachers' feedback focuses too much on what students have achieved and does not identify what they need to do to improve. A small minority of teachers do not give their feedback quickly enough for all students. At the time of the monitoring visit, students at the London campus had been waiting for feedback on their mathematics assessments since October.

A small proportion of learning resources are still not age- or role-appropriate. For example, the use of word search puzzles in a few lessons does not challenge students sufficiently. A small minority of resources show stereotypical images and do not develop students' understanding of the wider world appropriately enough. For example, resources show white males as leading businesses and females as administrative staff, cleaners and housekeepers.

How effectively do leaders, managers and teachers monitor, review and record students' progress, including how successfully they meet their EHC plan outcomes?

Reasonable progress

Teachers set personal targets for students that are clear and individualised. They help students to make small and manageable steps to achieving success. Teachers monitor these targets daily and students are clear about the progress they are making. The links between the assessment of students' starting points, individual learning plans and the monitoring of students' progress are clear. The in-class reward system is effective in helping students to strive to achieve more.

For a small number of students, leaders have demonstrated successfully to local authorities that students would benefit from a reassessment of their EHC plan outcomes, due to changes in the complexity of their needs. As a result, students' goals and aspirations are more in line with their needs and abilities.

Leaders and teachers know explicitly how successfully students are progressing towards their targets. However, this is because of the small number of students who attend each campus, and not due to the effectiveness of the new recording and monitoring arrangements. The arrangements require refinement for them to be a useful tool for leaders and teachers to report effectively on students' progress. For example, leaders and teachers set clear personal medium- and long-term targets for students – including for work placements – that link directly to students' EHC plans. However, they monitor students' achievements of these targets across a range of different tools and documents. Consequently, the new arrangements do not provide information centrally. This means that staff cannot see easily how students' personal targets are helping them to achieve their medium- and long-term goals, including their EHC plan outcomes, over time.

How effective is the curriculum offer in providing students with a wide range of practical subjects to develop their independence and work-related skills that enable them to have greater opportunities when they leave the college?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum offer effectively since the previous inspection. They have implemented a new curriculum that develops students' practical, work-related and independence skills successfully through carefully planned activities. These activities allow teachers to embed students' development of their English, mathematical and communication skills into lessons. For example, in an independent living lesson, students helped each other to measure the correct quantity of milk and other ingredients to make a smoothie. They communicated supportively with each other when their peers found the activity challenging and helped them to complete the activity successfully.

The new offer includes interesting enrichment activities that develop students' health and well-being, teamwork skills and communication skills. For example, students enjoy making a crazy golf course collaboratively. They plan to use the golf course in schools and wider community groups to help to develop these skills in others. In horticultural lessons, they learn how to tend a garden and to grow a wide range of fruit, vegetables and flowers. They also learn about recycling. Students participate regularly in drama and musical activities, and a few have become talented musicians. Students benefit from external educational visits that support their learning, such as to local museums.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have developed further the college's 'Karten Centre'. The Karten network is a network of ICT centres that receive funding from the Ian Karten Charitable Trust. Their aim is to improve the quality of life and independence of adults with SEND. At Langdon College's Karten Centre, students develop good ICT and enterprise skills. They produce designs that they print onto mugs, coasters and other products. They sell these directly to internal and external customers, and on well-known internet sites. They learn about business and production operations, such as stocktaking, and they understand business terminology, for example profit and loss. Students have effective supervision and support in these lessons and make good progress.

Leaders and teachers at the Salford campus match work experience placements appropriately to students' needs and interests. Students receive effective support in their work experience placements from specialist support staff and through assistive technology, where appropriate. Consequently, students enjoy their placements and develop effective work-related skills, such as teamwork and communication skills. A number of students have work placements within the Langdon Foundation's commercial enterprises, such as 'New Chapters', which sells second-hand books online.

At the London campus, work-related activities are not as advanced as at the Salford campus. For example, the curriculum pathways of 'pre-entry' and 'employability' programmes do not reflect all the students' job aspirations. Leaders have put plans in place to rectify this deficit through work experience placements. However, the impact of these arrangements is not yet evident.

How effective is the governing body in ensuring that the quality of the provision improves rapidly? Insufficient progress

Governors have not challenged leaders swiftly enough to make the rapid progress required after the previous inspection. They have approved a number of changes within the college, for example leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through performance management processes. These resulted in many staff leaving the college and the appointment of a new senior team. However, governors do not have a sufficient strategic oversight and understanding

of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision or of the function of governance. Governors continue to be very passionate about the college and its students and visit the college campuses regularly. However, their governance activities are too operational.

While governors are highly supportive of the new senior team, records of governors' meetings list points of discussion and do not demonstrate that governors challenge leaders. Nor do they measure the impact of their actions on improving the quality of the provision. For example, records show that governors deferred the discussion around the outcomes of the college's inspection to the following meeting. There is no evidence that the discussion actually took place at the next meeting or elsewhere. Governors are unable to recall whether they discussed inspection outcomes or not.

Self-assessment arrangements require development to ensure that they provide governors with a detailed understanding of the progress that leaders make against proposed actions. For example, while leaders have colour-coded actions in the draft quality improvement plan to show progress, many are coloured 'green', even though the deadline for completion is not due for several months. The plan does not include explanations relating to the amount of progress made, the impact of actions to date or why other actions are recorded as 'amber' or 'red'. Consequently, governors do not have an accurate understanding of the current quality of the provision. As a result, while progress has been made to rectify most of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, it has been too slow.

Leaders have recognised that governors need to develop their governance skills. As a result, they have arranged for governor training to take place in January 2019 that is specifically for governors of independent specialist colleges.

Governors have rectified significantly the skills gaps in the governing body. They have recruited governors who have educational backgrounds, including in education for students with SEND. One of the new governors is a trustee of the Langdon Foundation. This appointment provides an effective link between the college and the wider Langdon group of organisations.

As part of the review of governance, governors have established subgroups of the governing body to focus on specific areas of the college, such as teaching, learning and assessment, and finance. However, the impact of these subgroups is not yet evident.

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