

Brooke House Sixth Form College

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

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Type of provider: Sixth form college

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Brooke House Sixth Form College (BSix) was inspected in March 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 addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

BSix is a small sixth form college in the London borough of Hackney. Hackney is one of the most socially and economically deprived boroughs in the country and the unemployment rate is significantly above the rate for London and the UK. The proportion of students in Hackney who achieve five GCSEs at grade 4 and above, including English and mathematics, is similar to the remainder of London. A high proportion of students who study at BSix do so without a grade 4 or above in English and/or mathematics.

The college provides vocational and academic 16 to 19 study programmes for around a thousand students. Most students are aged 16 to 19. The majority of students study at level 3, with a minority studying at level 2 and below. The college also provides education for around 30 pupils aged 14 to 16.

Themes

What progress have governors made to increase the level of support and challenge they provide to leaders and managers to help raise the quality of provision across the college	Significant progress
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Since the previous inspection, governors have acted decisively to review the membership and skillset of the governing body. They have also reviewed the accuracy, timeliness, format and focus of governor reports, and the role of the subcommittees. As a result, they have made significant progress in addressing weaknesses in governance identified at the previous inspection.

Governors have comprehensively reviewed the membership of the board and appointed a new chair and deputy-chair. They have also recruited several new governors, as well as appointing staff and student governors to the board. The board now has a suitable breadth of skills and expertise to support the leadership team in carrying out its role. It also has improved lines of communication with staff and students.

Following the inspection, the new board acted promptly to oversee the appointment of a new principal and senior management team. Governors and senior leaders then reviewed the strategic focus of the college, and redefined its aims and objectives,

specifically to address those weaknesses identified at inspection. Governors also supported the senior leadership team to review the financial position and establish a longer-term financial plan for the college. The board is in strong position to track the strategic and financial progress of the college.

The new principal has worked closely with the board to increase governors' understanding of regional priorities and market opportunities. The principal has also clarified with governors the current factors influencing developments across further education and identified the unique characteristics of the college. As a result, governors have a much better appreciation of the balance of academic and vocational provision at the college and the needs of students, set in the context of the evolving priorities in further education. Governors are therefore better-placed to consider the longer-term options and establish a clear direction of travel for the college.

Governors have a thorough appreciation of the challenges facing the college, in relation to the quality of provision. They receive timely and suitably detailed reports from leaders and managers. Minutes from meetings confirm that the board discusses topics thoroughly and provides suitable challenge in raising expectations, and standards. Governors have a sound subcommittee structure in place, which enables them to provide suitable support and challenge to leaders and managers to help drive improvements in quality.

Governors are realistic about the challenges the college continues to face and recognise the need to embed recent changes. They are determined to maintain the focus on raising standards, strengthen the financial position of the college and capitalise on future strategic developments in Hackney.

What progress have governors, leaders and managers made in ensuring the college curriculum meets the full requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme, including extending students' mathematical skills and providing suitable careers information, advice and guidance to students?

Significant progress

Governors and leaders have completed a detailed review of the 16 to 19 curriculum and implemented a revised delivery model. As a result, the curriculum now fully meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme.

Managers have reviewed entry criteria for the college and improved the quality of pre-entry advice and guidance that students receive. Managers rightly recognise the importance of ensuring that they recruit the right students on to the most appropriate course to meet each student's individual needs. In September 2018, staff adhered closely to more stringent entry criteria. While the college recruited fewer students in September 2018, this strategy has led to a higher proportion of new recruits remaining on programmes that better meet their requirements. As a result, retention in the early stages of the programme has improved significantly.

A significant proportion of students do not have a grade 4 or above in GCSE English and/or mathematics when they commence their study programme. Teachers have improved the initial advice and guidance procedures. As a result, they place students on a suitable programme, so they can develop their literacy and numeracy skills and work towards raising their examination grade.

Leaders have carried out a full review of the tutorial function at the college and have placed this at the heart of the study programme. Managers have revised the expectations of tutors and provided training to staff to ensure that they are aware of their increased responsibilities in the role. In addition, they have appointed a small group of more-specialist tutors to provide further guidance and support to all tutors. Leaders have also increased the proportion of time available each week for students to attend tutorials.

Tutors have extended the tutorial curriculum to ensure that it addresses a wide range of subjects associated with personal, social and health education. This includes raising students' understanding of diversity, well-being, the environment, employability and enterprise. Managers also expect tutors to meet with their tutees frequently and carry out detailed progress reviews, using a newly introduced progress tracking tool. As a result, students are now much clearer about the progress they are making, and tutors can target extra support towards students who make slower progress.

Managers have reviewed thoroughly their approach to providing work experience and work-related learning to students. They have strengthened their partnership with employers and have created timely opportunities for students to complete work experience. At the time of the monitoring visit around a third of students had already completed work placements, and managers had clear plans in place for the remaining students.

Teachers have expanded opportunities for students to take part in other work-related learning and enrichment activities. The student handbook clearly states the intentions of the programme to increase the skills, confidence and enjoyment of students while at college. Managers arrange an extensive programme of lectures and debates, entitled 'knowledge is power', which includes topics such as recognising black women writers, gang violence, and the history of South Asian migrants. Teachers have also extended the enrichment programme to include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and a broad array of sports activities. Students rightly appreciate the increased range of opportunities that are available to them.

What progress have leaders and managers made in following through with strategies to improve attendance, raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and review the impact of this work? **Reasonable progress**

Since the inspection, leaders and managers have evaluated key priorities for developments in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. In the short term,

they have prioritised the need to develop the tutorial skills of teachers. They have provided guidance to teachers on how to embed functional numeracy more successfully in lessons, which is having a positive impact on the development of students' skills. Managers have increased their expectations of the tutors, and placed a greater focus on the role. Tutors are readily implementing the new curriculum and progress-tracking measures.

Under the new tutorial role, tutors are now responsible for tracking and monitoring attendance. While the attendance is not yet high enough, it improved in the autumn term 2018 in comparison to the previous year.

Leaders have successfully attracted additional funds from the strategic college improvement fund. Managers are working in partnership with a good college to use these funds to continue with initiatives to raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

The new leadership team also has plans in place to use a proportion of the improvement funds to provide a management development programme to heads of department. The main priority of leaders is to empower managers to play a more active, hands-on role in overseeing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their respective departments, with the intention of managers becoming 'leaders of learning'.

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