

Chichester college group

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 130843

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Inspection date(s): 27 to 28 February 2019

Type of provider: General further education college

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Central Sussex College merged with Chichester College to form the Chichester College Group (CCG) in August 2017. Central Sussex College required improvement at its last full inspection in October 2016 and Chichester College was judged as outstanding in its most recent full inspection in April 2014. The college group is comprised of Chichester College, Crawley College and Brinsbury.

The primary focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in dealing with the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection of Central Sussex College, and what improvement still needs to be made. During the monitoring visit, inspectors visited the Crawley College campus only.

Themes

What progress have governors and senior leaders made in strengthening the leadership and management of the merged college to drive rapid improvement to the student experience and student outcomes, ensuring effective governance and oversight of the college is in place to hold managers to account? **Significant progress**

Governors and senior leaders have made significant progress in strengthening the leadership and management of the merged college.

The new senior leadership team, supported by governors, has driven rapid improvements to student outcomes at Crawley College. They have successfully undertaken a wide range of actions that have had a positive impact on the staff and student experience and on student progress and outcomes. Middle managers are now able to make decisions that are best for their students. The ethos of the college has changed to putting students at the heart of everything done and to placing greater importance on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Middle managers are now encouraged and supported to focus on this in their departments. Because of extensive professional development and peer collaboration, managers' confidence and knowledge about their own areas has grown rapidly. Consequently, they have been able to develop their teams' skills as well as their own. The quality of provision in many areas has improved. Middle managers are now better able to make accurate, evidence-based judgements about the quality of the provision in their area.

Student achievement in many areas at Crawley College, although starting from a very low base, has improved significantly in the first year following merger. Student retention has also improved. This is because the support given to students, who might otherwise have left, is more active, frequent and targeted. Students are

supported effectively to resolve any concerns or overcome any barriers and to remain on programme.

Leaders and managers have carried out a significant restructure of student support. Every student now has frequent contact with a tutor who reviews their overall development and progress, and not just their progress towards achieving their qualification. This approach ensures that all aspects of students' personal development and welfare are reviewed and their progress towards their intended destination is tracked and monitored.

Leaders and managers have introduced a 'positive behaviour management' strategy. This results in a clear and well-structured referral process for students at risk of dropping out or falling behind. Staff identify these students at an early stage and put in place appropriate and effective interventions. As a result, student retention has improved. Retention has improved for learners at greatest risk. Leaders and managers are keenly aware that, as a consequence, the overall rate of attendance across the college has dropped slightly. However, they recognise that for these most vulnerable students, attending for at least part of the week is an accomplishment. They are now working closely with them to improve their attendance.

Leaders and managers have improved the student induction process. Students and the college now share the same clear and focused expectations. Staff quickly identify students' potential barriers to learning and put support in place for them. As a result, this year, a significantly increased number of students have been retained beyond the initial six-week period.

Leaders and managers give high priority to listening to the students and value their contribution to driving forward improvements across the college. Students are integral to many quality assurance activities and play a key role. For example, the members of the student executive are all trained and given a 'licence to observe' teaching sessions.

Leaders and managers have worked hard to improve the reputation of the college in the local community and to increase employer engagement. Careers fairs are now held for every curriculum area and students have increased opportunities to become involved in external work experience and work placements. As a result, more students are taking up placements and attending events and activities to help support their progression.

Governors retain effective oversight of the quality of provision and students' experience at Crawley College. Following merger, the structure of the group corporation was comprehensively reviewed. A local board maintains effective oversight of the improvements to teaching, learning and assessment at Crawley College, and it reports to the main board for the college group.

Governors receive, analyse and challenge detailed reports from senior leaders and managers. Senior leaders and managers feel comfortable and confident to highlight both strengths and weaknesses with the board. They are confident they will receive the support needed for improvement. Governors now receive accurate and honest reports about the quality and performance of the College.

What progress have leaders, managers and teachers made in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that students develop their vocational and academic skills and make good or better progress?

Significant progress

Leaders and managers have significantly improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They support teachers to improve the quality of their practice, take risks and be more innovative to meet the needs of their students. For example, the initiatives include a quality forum and innovation group and a 'licence to coach' for professional learning coaches. As a result, teachers make teaching more imaginative, engaging and enjoyable for learners.

Leaders, managers and teachers are focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They consider the needs of students in every aspect of their work. Communication across the college has greatly improved and teachers feel valued, and this is in turn having a positive effect on students. Students are more engaged in all aspects of their studies because good support is readily available.

Teachers now share good practice, with a strong focus on supporting learning in the classrooms and workshops. Teachers collaborate more readily and willingly across curriculum areas, working together to meet the needs of students. Teachers have embraced the changing culture within the college and want to do their best for their students.

Students can readily identify how improved teaching, learning and assessment help them make good progress in developing their vocational and academic skills. For example, health and social care and media students access a range of enrichment and work placement opportunities to help them plan and prepare for career progression.

Professional learning coaches give intensive support to teachers to improve their practice. Teachers value this support and are enthusiastic about the improvements they make. For example, they identify improved positive learner engagement in workshops and classrooms. Learners are now developing highly relevant knowledge and skills in the workshops.

Leaders have recently improved the performance management of teachers. Because of the increased expectations of staff, teachers feel more valued, and they receive more effective support. Consequently, the majority are keen to improve and develop their practice. Where staff have not wanted to improve, they have left the college.

What progress have leaders, managers and teachers made in implementing effective and accurate monitoring and tracking of student participation, progress, attendance and retention?

Significant progress

Leaders and managers have improved the monitoring and tracking of student participation, progress, attendance and retention. As a result, leaders, managers, teachers and student tutors now access and effectively use the wide range of consistently accurate data available. For example, detailed data allows a curriculum manager to see if a student is falling behind, requires additional support or whether a referral for welfare support is needed. Data also identifies where a student is doing well, where they have cause for celebration and when they are on target to achieve their learning goals.

Teachers and student tutors use the tracking system to monitor students' attendance, retention and participation, including in enrichment activities and work experience. As a result, all staff working with a student have a full picture of the progress made across the programme of study. This information is also shared with the student and their parents or carers.

Currently the new systems that have been introduced at Crawley are the first stage in a carefully planned process. Leaders and managers have carefully planned to introduce the systems in incremental stages to build manager, staff and student confidence and to gain their commitment to using them.

Senior leaders have made significant investment in time and training to ensure that the vast majority of teachers and managers are confident users and see the benefit of the new systems. Many acknowledge the rapid improvement in their ability to monitor and track students in their curriculum areas. As a result, staff are more effective in putting in place interventions to support students' success.

What progress have senior leaders and managers made in implementing an effective programme of cultural change that raises the aspirations of teachers and students and sets consistently high expectations in all aspects of their student journey? **Significant progress**

Leaders and managers have implemented a highly effective programme of cultural change that has raised the aspirations of teachers and students and has set high expectations for the success of all students. Staff and student morale are now high. There is a genuine enthusiasm and commitment among staff and students to meet the high expectations set.

Leaders and managers have implemented a strong programme for improvement. In particular, they have provided extensive professional development for managers, support staff and teachers. Staff are now confident to tackle a range of situations and are not afraid to ask for support and advice. Staff now feel that they are trusted. They have self-belief, and they can take risks and try new approaches.

Effective communication across the college group has successfully supported curriculum and business support areas, and the practice of individual managers and teachers. For example, the use of peer buddies and peer review work has enabled staff to successfully share their practice and develop their skills and confidence.

Students value the caring and supportive learning environment created by staff at the college. As a result, they express a strong sense of belonging to the college community. They have played an active role in building a student-focused range of enrichment activities, for example with the introduction of football and drama clubs, trips to local adventure parks and trips abroad to Germany, New York and Kenya.

Senior leaders and managers have worked hard to raise the profile of the college within the local community and to ensure that it serves the community more effectively. As a result, local employers and parents of school leavers now see the college in a far more positive light. Student applications have increased and opportunities to work with local businesses have grown.

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