

New City College

Monitoring visit report

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Address: New City College
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

New City College was formed by a merger of four predecessor colleges. Tower Hamlets College merged with Hackney Community College in August 2016. Redbridge College joined the group in April 2017. Epping Forest College was the last to join in August 2018.

At its most recent inspection in 2013, Tower Hamlets College was judged to be good. In 2015, Hackney Community College and Redbridge College were judged to be good. At its most recent inspection in 2018, Epping Forest College was judged to require improvement. The focus of this visit was to look at the progress that leaders had made on the main areas of improvement from the most recent inspection of Epping Forest College.

At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 13,308 learners at New City College. The majority were adult learners. Around a third were on 16 to 19 study programmes. There were 644 apprentices across the college group, 416 learners who have high needs and 86 learners aged 14 to 16.

Themes

What progress have leaders made in improving the management of apprenticeship programmes? Reasonable progress

At the most recent inspection of Epping Forest College, apprenticeships were judged to be inadequate. The progress that apprentices made in their learning was too slow. Too many did not achieve their qualification. Staff did not have reliable information to manage apprentices' progress effectively. At the time of the visit, at the Epping Forest campus 18 apprentices on electrical installation were completing their programmes.

Since the merger, the new senior leadership team has halted the decline in the apprenticeship provision. Leaders have improved teaching and assessment practice. They have focused well on getting more apprentices through their qualification. Managers have been quick to gain better oversight of the progress and outcomes of apprentices. Senior leaders are making good use of staff from other campuses to improve practice. They have put in place a curriculum that takes the best practice from the four predecessor colleges. They have a solid base to improve outcomes for apprentices, which have not been consistent or high enough over the last few years.

Leaders have been adept at supporting apprentices at risk of not achieving. For example, the few electrical installation apprentices are now back on track to achieve. These apprentices noted and valued the changes made by leaders to help them

complete their apprenticeship. Leaders have made sure that the principles and requirements of the apprenticeship programme are now in place. Attendance of apprentices at their lessons has improved. Employers are positive about the improved communication they have with the college. This has helped to plan learning and check the progress of apprentices. In a few cases, assessors do not check the work of apprentices effectively to help them understand what they need to do to improve.

What progress have leaders and teachers made in improving teaching, learning and assessment?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and teachers have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. It is part of a New City College drive for improvement. They have a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and assessment. They are aware there is more work to do to improve the quality teaching at the Epping Forest Campus to be consistently good across different subjects.

Senior leaders focus well on developing teachers' skills. Teachers have welcomed a more supportive approach where peers assess what they could improve or what they do well. Teachers feel supported to talk about how they can improve without fear of failure. Managers follow up actions that arise from the assessment of weaknesses in teaching effectively. Across the college, teachers are beginning to share good practice, leading to improvements in the quality of learning.

Leaders and managers have made improvements in checking the progress that learners make. They have improved the assessment of learning and know better how well their learners understand the course content. Teachers have also improved how well they monitor learners who are making slower progress. In a few cases, teachers do not correct learners' written work where there are spelling and grammatical errors. As a result, these learners are repeating the same mistakes in their work.

Teachers help learners develop useful skills. In hairdressing lessons, learners are confident when talking with clients about the techniques they use. Performing arts learners talk about how they have developed their resilience to cope with challenges in performance. In a few cases, learners' knowledge of a topic is not secure enough.

The proportion of learners who achieve their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics has increased. Staff with expertise in these subjects work effectively with teachers in vocational subject areas. Personal tutors now receive frequent and useful reports on the progress of learners.

What progress have leaders made in setting up effective governance arrangements across the newly-merged college? Significant progress

The governance arrangements at New City College are effective. Governors and leaders have created a strong sense of purpose to improve the newly-merged college which is shared by staff. Leaders at all levels have a determination to make the college a success for their learners. Senior leaders have focused well on fundamental performance indicators. These include how well learners attend and stay on their courses. Governors and leaders at all levels have worked to improve these gaps in quality. It has meant a significant culture change in the expectations of learners. More learners have stayed on their courses this year, and there has been an improvement in learners' frequency of attendance in lessons.

Governors are aware of, and are committed to, the challenges that New City College faces. They have a clear picture of the relative performance of all the colleges in the group. They use pertinent information to assess the quality of teaching over time. Governors offer good advice on leaders' curriculum planning and proposals. They scrutinise information and use it skilfully to question and support leaders' performance.

Leaders across the college are self-critical. They know the gaps in education and training provision across the college. They have a sharp focus on helping more learners to achieve. This focus includes evaluating and improving subject performance across the campuses. The proportion of learners achieving their qualifications has increased.

Leaders and governors have a clear oversight of the quality of teaching. They are working effectively to develop better teaching across the college. They are finding and remedying less effective practice. They are clear on the expectations they have for teaching. They are aware of the variations in the quality of teaching in parts of the curriculum.

Leaders often seek learners' views in focus groups on the quality of their learning experience. They ensure that they make improvements to quality as a result. Learners' feedback in surveys on teaching is useful, but it is not clear how leaders use this information. The self-assessment report does not give a clear picture on what the quality of teaching is like from the learners' perspective.

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