

Moulton College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first re-inspection monitoring visit to Moulton College following publication of the inspection report on 19 June 2019, which found the provider to be inadequate overall. At that time, inspectors judged all key themes to be inadequate.

At the time of the monitoring visit, the new principal had been in post for three months. Several other senior leaders were interim leaders and had joined the college since the principal's arrival. A number of middle managers were also recent appointments. The appointment of the new principal coincided with the end of the summer term and, as a result, she has only had a very short space of time in which to work with the full complement of staff and students.

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made in raising the expectations teachers have of what students should know and be able to do? To what extent has this resulted in improvements to the quality of education and the standards of work produced by students? **Insufficient progress**

Leaders and managers have not yet been successful in improving the quality of education provided at the college. However, they have carried out a number of actions intended to raise standards. These include improved use of data to show staff the impact of poor teaching on student's outcomes; a new process for observing teachers at work; and staff training in teaching, learning and assessment. However, because they have had limited time to work with teachers, their actions have yet to have much discernible impact on the quality of lessons.

Teachers' expectations of what students should know and be able to do remain too low. Teachers and managers have not done enough to identify, in precise terms, what students should learn and how well they should be able to perform. Consequently, teachers struggle to model high expectations.

Because teachers have not clearly identified what high performance looks like in terms of the knowledge and skills which students should develop, they have not planned and sequenced the curriculum carefully enough. They have not identified opportunities for students to practise what they have learned or how they will use assessment to check and develop students' understanding. Consequently, students do not develop a secure understanding of topics or mastery of skills.

Teachers make use of a wide variety of activities in lessons in an attempt to make them stimulating and enjoyable. However, they give too little thought to the likely effectiveness of activities in helping students to learn. Lessons are therefore busy, rather than productive.

Teachers set assessment activities, but it is too early in the year to make judgements about whether students work to a high enough standard. However, inspectors did see examples of assessments for which teachers had not prepared students well enough. Teachers mark work carefully, but they do not always give feedback that is precise enough to help students to improve. The quality of guidance from individual teachers is of a variable standard, suggesting that they are not always familiar with the principles of effective feedback. For example, a single piece of work can include sharp, focused feedback that identifies precisely the changes the student should make, followed by a vague comment like 'reflect on your use of grammar'. Such statements give no indication of why students should do so, or, in this case, what aspect of grammar they should reflect upon. Teachers do not always provide feedback that helps students to develop their writing skills, and even guidance from English teachers is unhelpful and occasionally incorrect.

English and mathematics lessons, identified as a particular weakness at the previous inspection, remain of mixed quality. In the best of the small number of lessons visited, teachers had planned lessons that fitted into a coherent sequence. The lessons themselves carefully and progressively built students' understanding of topics, and allowed them to concentrate on clear and specific themes. This focused their attention well on key learning points.

Managers have found it difficult to place students into appropriate groups in a timely way. The changes and uncertainty surrounding the composition and timetabling of English and mathematics groups makes it difficult for English and mathematics teachers to deliver well-structured learning programmes. This threatens to derail planned improvements in the quality of education in these subjects.

However, in the less effective lessons teachers did not ensure that students had a secure grasp of prerequisite learning before starting to teach lessons on more complex material. They had not prepared well enough and consequently their explanations were unclear, and they did not model techniques well enough. They employed time-consuming activities that contributed little to students' understanding. They tried to cover too much material in a single lesson, moving on before students had fully grasped the previous topic. As a result, students in these sessions gained little insight into the material covered.

How much progress have staff made in improving the previously low levels of attendance, particularly in sport, English and mathematics lessons? Reasonable progress

Leaders have taken a number of actions to improve attendance across the college. These include the introduction of monthly programme monitoring boards to hold managers to account, daily phone calls to absent students, and the appointment of a community officer to chase up persistent absentees. They have placed attendance at the top of all quality assurance meeting agendas at all levels of the college. In addition, the principal has stressed the importance of attendance, particularly to English and mathematics lessons, during student induction sessions. Where students are absent from lessons, teachers check carefully the reasons for it. Although it is too

early to be certain, initial indications suggest that these actions have had a positive impact on the overall attendance of students.

However, problems with the organisation of English and mathematics lessons have affected attendance in these subjects. Staff and timetable difficulties mean registers often include students who have moved to other groups or fail to include students who have moved into the group. Not all registers from English and mathematics lessons have been processed yet. Although college data suggests that attendance at these lessons is not high enough, the exact extent of this is unclear.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that students for whom the college receives high needs funding benefit from teaching that meets their specific learning and support needs? Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection, senior leaders have appointed a head of learning support who has experience of working with students with high needs. They have also recruited a number of learning support assistants who have specialist skills in supporting students with particular learning difficulties, such as autism spectrum disorder.

Staff now create and maintain clear and detailed records for high-needs students. These include guidance on how teachers should provide additional help to these students. They are available for all relevant managers, teachers and learning support assistants to read and use. Teachers are aware of these records and make use of the information they provide. Similarly, most learning support assistants use them to gain an understanding of how they should help students with high needs.

Most vocational teachers have a basic understanding of how to support students with high needs. They make appropriate adaptations to their teaching. Most staff recognise the need to help these students to develop their independence, and provide suitable opportunities for them to do so in lessons. However, not all teachers understand the specific, and sometimes unusual, challenges faced by students with high needs who attend their lessons. They are not equipped with the specialist skills they need to provide highly effective support. Managers have recognised this and plan to provide specialist training in the immediate future.

Vocational teachers have received basic training on how to coordinate their teaching with the work of in-class learning support assistants. Most teachers do this effectively, although a minority do not utilise learning support assistants well enough. For example, they do not make good use of learning support assistants to help integrate students with high needs into group activities. Managers are aware of this. Lesson observations that focus specifically on learning support and students with high needs are due to commence shortly. Managers intend to use the information these observations provide to plan further training.

Students with high needs attend well. Those met by inspectors have settled successfully into college life. They value the support that they receive. Although it is too early to be sure, they appear to make progress in line with their peers.

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