

City College Norwich

Partial reinspection report

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Type of provider: General Further Education college

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Introduction

At the previous inspection in December 2008 overall effectiveness was satisfactory. This reinspection is of science and mathematics only. A focused monitoring visit (FMV) in September 2009 found that City College Norwich (CCN) had made reasonable or significant progress against all areas for improvement found at the inspection.

The outcome of the reinspection is as follows:

Subject area/type of provision	Original grade	Reinspection grade
Science and mathematics	4	3

Context

CCN is a large college of further and higher education based close to the city centre. Approximately 200 students are enrolled on AS courses and 90 on GCE A level courses in biology, chemistry, physics, psychology, mathematics and further mathematics. About 220 students study GCSE subjects in psychology, science and mathematics. Most students in this area are full time and aged 16 to 18. Approximately 20 students are enrolled on GCSE science and mathematics courses in the evening. An access to science course is followed by 70 adult students. Approximately two-thirds of the students are female and 10% are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory. Success rates have improved significantly on most AS and GCSE subjects since 2007/08, and are high on AS biology and chemistry and GCE A-level chemistry, physics, mathematics and further mathematics courses. They are low, however, on AS mathematics and further mathematics and GCE A-level biology and psychology.
- Students make good progress compared with their prior attainment on GCE A-level chemistry and mathematics and AS biology, but poor progress on GCE A-level and AS further mathematics. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.
- Many students obtain high grade pass rates on GCE A-level chemistry, further mathematics, mathematics and physics and GCSE psychology, but few gain high grades in AS chemistry, further mathematics, mathematics and psychology and GCSE science and additional science.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, students' learning is enhanced by the stimulating use of information learning technology (ILT). Students are challenged by learning activities which are designed to meet individual learning needs. Teachers plan well. In the less effective lessons, students are not fully involved; the teacher talks excessively and uses ILT inappropriately. The pace is slow and delivery monotonous; students become disaffected.

- Assessment is satisfactory. In the best examples, teachers mark work rigorously and provide very helpful advice to enable students to improve their work. In the less effective cases, teachers do not correct spelling, grammar and meaning. The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons and assessment is underdeveloped.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Teachers give very good subject support and enable students to understand more complex issues. Additional learning support is effective and teachers liaise well with learning support assistants. Students access most of their advice and support needs through a single central source.
- The use of individual learning plans and target setting is very variable. In some cases, the plans are comprehensive and completed frequently. The targets are detailed and individualised and helpful to students. In other examples, plans are completed infrequently and targets are too general and not constructive to students' progress.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The self-assessment report is detailed, analytical and accurate. Quality assurance and self-assessment processes have improved since the last inspection. Students' views inform the self-assessment report effectively. The inclusion of stakeholders' opinions in self-assessment, however, is underdeveloped.
- Managers have raised the ambitions and expectations of staff successfully since the last inspection. Teachers' skills and confidence have improved. Teachers have higher expectations of their students. Managers have taken appropriate actions to improve provision for students.
- Equality and diversity are satisfactory. All staff have undertaken appropriate training in equality aspects. Students, however, are unaware of the wider implications of equality. Different groups of students do not underachieve, but the college is aware of the need to analyse this data further.

What does City College Norwich need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' outcomes in AS mathematics and further mathematics and GCE A-level biology and psychology by challenging students more in lessons and through assessments.
- Continue to share good practice in teaching, learning and assessment practices so that all teachers aspire to and achieve best practice.
- Increase the emphasis on aspects of equality and diversity in lessons and assessments so that all students are aware of wider issues and are well prepared for life in a diverse society.
- Improve the quality and consistency of individual learning plans and target setting so that all students benefit from frequent and comprehensive progress reviews and individualised and constructive target setting.
- Involve external stakeholders in self-assessment so that their views inform quality improvement action plan

Inspectors explored the following additional themes as part of this reinspection.

Themes

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving outcomes for students? Reasonable progress

Outcomes are satisfactory, with success rates for most programmes showing an upward trend over the previous three years. The overall success rate for students aged 16 to 18 on long courses was an area for improvement in the previous inspection. It has risen by three percentage points, and is now satisfactory. Success rates on AS courses are now satisfactory, having risen by seven percentage points in 2008/09, although on GCE A-level courses they were low in the same year. The college has analysed carefully the reasons for all underperforming programmes. It has taken appropriate steps which are focused precisely to improve outcomes on these courses. These include specific staff training in teaching for learning and redesigning aspects of the curriculum. A popular homework club supports students who need more study and academic skills support. The college has also closed some courses which have a history of poor success. Heads of school and programme leaders now have much greater access to up-to-date and accurate retention and achievement data. They have embraced their responsibility to use this data to challenge underperformance and share good practice. Managers at all levels have regular meetings with staff to discuss retention and achievement. Attendance has improved, and is now satisfactory.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has City College Norwich made in improving the rigour and accuracy of its self assessment? Significant progress

The college has made significant progress in improving the rigour and accuracy of its self assessment since the previous inspection. The current self-assessment report pays very close attention to data and evaluates evidence well. Students and staff are involved fully in all aspects of the process. They benefit from a clear framework for self evaluation against the themes identified in the common inspection framework. Staff have a much greater awareness of the impact of data on judgements and the importance of safeguarding. The self-assessment process has led to several improvements that have impacted on students' experiences. These include a single central location for student services, increased work experience in the curriculum, improved coordination of links with external stakeholders and a new submission policy, designed in close consultation with students, which has led to improved high grade achievement. Staff recognise and value self assessment as a continuous process of review and improvement, and managers benefit from their increased ownership of, and responsibility for, the quality of provision in their areas.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has City College Norwich made in improving the accuracy of the lesson observation process? Significant progress

The previous inspection identified the consistency of provision across all subject areas as an area for improvement and the FMV judged that reasonable progress had been made to address this. At the time of the reinspection, inspectors focused on the progress made in improving the observation of teaching and learning, a key factor in the improvement of consistency. The new professional development team now monitors observation well. Observers are trained through grading videos of lessons, regular and robust standardisation meetings and working with an external consultant. They use a detailed grid of expected teaching and learning practices to train staff before they are observed so that teachers understand fully the observers' focus on learning and students' progress. The use of this grid by teachers and observers is resulting in increasingly consistent and objective feedback on lessons and forms the basis of informed self-reflection on the quality of lessons. Curriculum teams have regular reports on the main areas for development identified through observation and then receive specific training matched to these needs. All staff whose lessons are inadequate or satisfactory are given further individual support. In many cases this has improved their confidence and practice significantly.

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