

Sir George Monoux College

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

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Sir George Monoux College was inspected in January 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.

Sir George Monoux College is a medium-sized sixth-form college located in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. Around 1,600 full-time students, nearly all of whom are aged 16 to 18, are on study programmes. The majority of students are on vocational courses at level 3, while a minority are studying at level 2 and on A-level programmes. Waltham Forest has significant levels of socio-economic deprivation, with relatively high levels of low-paid employment and homelessness. A high number of students at the college come from some of the most deprived areas of the borough and adjoining boroughs.

Themes

What impact have leaders' and managers' actions had in increasing the proportion of students who achieve their qualifications and the grades expected of them? Reasonable progress

Leaders' and managers' actions have improved the overall proportion of students who gain their qualifications. The majority of students on vocational programmes at level 3 achieve high grades. Students on vocational courses in business studies at level 3, which is the largest group of students, make very good progress, as do those studying applied science, media and information technology.

The proportion of students who achieve a grade 4 or better in GCSE English is high and students make good progress from their starting points. In GCSE mathematics, the proportion of students who achieve a grade 4 or better has improved but remains low.

Leaders, managers and teaching staff have been effective in supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve their vocational qualifications. These students achieve at a higher rate than their peers and make very good progress.

Leaders and managers have not improved sufficiently the proportion of students who achieve their A-level qualifications and the grades expected of them. In A-level art, graphic design, photography and English there have been small improvements. In

physics, there has been a marked improvement in the proportion of students who make good progress and achieve their qualifications. However, in the large groups of students completing A levels in psychology, and in other subjects such as chemistry, biology, business studies, and economics, the proportion of students gaining the grades expected of them remains too low.

In September 2018, the proportion of students who continued on to the second year of their programme increased markedly and is now high.

How effective have leaders and managers been in increasing the opportunities for students to have work experience to support the development of their work-related skills? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders, managers and staff have implemented a variety of appropriate activities to support the development of students' work-related skills. The number of students who accessed external work placements towards the end of 2017/18 increased. Most students on vocational courses in applied science, business studies, media, art, creative and performing arts, and travel and tourism attended external work-experience placements. As a result, they developed their skills in time management, decision-making and working under pressure.

Leaders and managers acknowledge that in the current academic year students on other vocational and A-level courses need access to work experience. They have clear plans in place to facilitate this and placements are available for students from October 2018. Students have a good understanding of the benefits of work experience and know when this is planned within their timetables.

The vast majority of students attend work-related activities, such as employer talks, project work and external events. For example, in media, students attended a masterclass training event at a very well-known marketing and communications agency. They contributed to the development of live reports and gained an understanding of how marketing works. In dance, students performed at a local fundraising garden party. Business studies students worked on projects which helped them to understand how to set up a small business.

What impact have leaders and managers had in supporting teachers to plan lessons that engage and motivate students more so that all students make good progress? **Reasonable progress**

After the inspection in January 2018, leaders and managers implemented quickly a structured and appropriate training plan to support the many new teachers at the college and those who needed support. Managers focused specifically on supporting teachers to improve their practices through a range of in-house training sessions and

activities. For example, these included how to extend students' learning, effective strategies for assessment, fostering good behaviour for learning, and peer observations. As a result, students on the majority of vocational courses now make good progress.

Teaching staff make good use of the support available to them through the learning coaches, and they value the training they receive. For example, learning coaches give teachers guidance on how to develop questioning techniques and plan appropriately paced lessons. In the lessons observed during the monitoring visit, students were motivated, challenged and learning. For example, in A-level mathematics, teachers challenged students to solve very complex algebraic problems. In vocational art at level 2, students discussed architectural shapes in design to create artefacts and they learned appropriate vocational language.

Teachers use the newly implemented tracking system effectively in order to check students' progress. They give students helpful feedback on how to improve their work. Students understand fully what they need to do to improve and the target grades they work towards.

Teachers provide good support to students to help them develop their independent learning skills outside the classroom. For example, in A-level chemistry and psychology, teachers have high expectations of the homework students should complete, and of the preparation they should do for their next lessons.

Students' work, in the sample reviewed during the monitoring visit, is of a good standard. Students in their first year of studying at the college have made good progress in the early part of the year. Students enjoy their learning and have high aspirations for success.

In a few lessons, teachers do not identify quickly enough those students who need to be challenged in their learning. They do not plan and teach lessons effectively to meet the needs of all students, including the most able, and to extend their knowledge. Teachers' facilitation of students marking each other's work and giving feedback requires improvement. Teachers do not give students clear assessment criteria to use and, consequently, they do not know whether they have given accurate feedback to their peers.

What impact have leaders and managers had in improving students' behaviour and attitudes to learning, particularly regarding attendance, punctuality and the management of their folders and/or notebooks? Significant progress

Leaders and managers have been highly effective in their actions to improve students' behaviour and readiness to learn. Students are punctual to lessons and their attendance is good. The proportion of students attending GCSE and functional

skills classes in English and mathematics has improved significantly in comparison to this time last year.

Leaders' implementation of the new 'entry period', that requires students to sign into the college fifteen minutes before lessons start, has had a positive effect on making sure students are punctual and ready to learn. During this period, staff welcome students into the college and ensure that they remove their headphones, turn off their mobile phones and have their note-books and resources ready for their classes. At this time, in the learning zone staff announce what is happening in the college daily. For example, their announcements may include the availability of focused support, and information around mental health and the promotion of healthy eating. Most students value this time and feel it prepares them appropriately to start their learning.

Leaders, managers and staff introduced successfully a new induction for students, which sets out clearly the expected behaviour of a 'Monoux student'. Students returning to the college to start their second year told inspectors that they had noticed how staff deal with students who are late and misbehave much quicker now. Students said that teachers and other staff have high expectations around behaviour and attendance.

Students' behaviour is good. They are respectful towards their peers and their teachers in lessons and when moving around the college. In classes, students take notes regularly in the folders and books given to them by staff at the start of the term. Their folders are managed efficiently and looked after, and students are proud of the work inside them.

Staff provide good support to students to develop their note-taking skills. Students use a variety of methods effectively, for example mind-maps and flashcards, to help them consolidate their learning.

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