

# Strathmore College

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

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**Unique reference number:** 132021  
**Name of lead inspector:** Martin Ward, Her Majesty's Inspector  
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**Type of provider:** Independent specialist college

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Strathmore College was inspected in June 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.

The college provides education for learners who have mild to severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The college has a high proportion of learners with autism spectrum disorder. Most learners have communication, speech and language difficulties. At the time of the visit there were 37 learners at the college between the ages of 16 and 25. The college is part of the Priory Group.

### Themes

#### **What progress are governors making in holding senior managers to account for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and outcomes for learners? Significant progress**

Governors and senior leaders have responded swiftly and effectively to the key recommendations from the previous inspection report and have made significant progress. Governors use a range of group and individual meetings to challenge and support senior managers. When issues arise, governors respond swiftly and flexibly. As a result, managers maintain momentum in their work with staff.

Governors request and receive frequent, regular and detailed management reports. They are well informed about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the progress of learners. Governors ensure that senior managers consider issues from a range of perspectives. For example, governors ask probing questions about the progress that learners are making and set clear actions for managers to implement before the next meeting.

Governors have changed the senior staffing structure to include a specific role with responsibility for teaching, learning and assessment. The new post-holder has been instrumental in shaping and implementing a clear vision for high-quality teaching, learning and assessment.

Senior leaders and governors use external consultants effectively to provide additional challenge and to increase the pace of improvement. External practitioners share ideas that work successfully in other contexts; managers consider how they can apply these ideas effectively at Strathmore. Governors and senior leaders have established a challenge and support group, which provides a critical external

perspective on the judgements of managers at Strathmore College. This is particularly effective when considering self-assessment judgements and when managers are looking for appropriate benchmarks.

Governors receive detailed quantitative and qualitative information which helps them to form accurate judgements on progress and quality. Managers provide reports on attendance data and qualification success rates, and on the quality of target-setting and the key strengths and areas for improvement in classroom practice.

The quality of teaching and learning and the progress that learners are making are improving rapidly.

A difference still exists between the internal achievement data and the published achievement data. Senior managers and governors are investigating this disparity.

<b>What progress are senior leaders making in improving the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment through quality improvement plans, performance management of staff and providing appropriate staff training?</b>	<b>Significant progress</b>
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Managers have been successful in rapidly improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers understand the improvements that have been made and the areas for further improvement.

Senior leaders use quality improvement plans effectively. They have developed detailed action plans for improvement, which focus on the key elements within the process of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers identify the actions that they will take to improve the quality of individual learning plans, target-setting, English and mathematical skills, and the effective use of learning support assistants. Managers develop plans and actions with challenging timescales and clear management accountability. Managers and teachers make rapid progress in achieving these targets. Learners are making better progress compared to the same period last year.

Managers have ensured that teachers are well trained and prepared for the new approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. Managers have delivered intensive training, which has had a positive impact on teachers' performance. Managers continue to support teachers well through mentors and team leaders.

Managers effectively evaluate the performance of staff, and this has improved the quality of their teaching, learning and assessment. Managers have improved the performance management of staff by making observations more accurate and evaluative, auditing session plans and course plans, and checking the quality of individual learning plans. Managers have established clear and appropriate standards for each part of the performance management process. Managers provide detailed feedback to staff on how to improve each element of their work, and they review teachers' progress. Managers have identified staff who are underperforming and have helped them to do better.

Managers have improved the system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. It is based on a clear and appropriate set of expectations. Managers have

trained all observers. Observers produce helpful evaluative comments, which are based on the teaching and learning process and the impact on the learner.

**What progress have teachers made in improving learners' skills through planning and target-setting?      Significant progress**

Senior leaders and managers have quickly improved the quality of teachers' target-setting and planning since the previous inspection. Managers and staff are clear about the importance of setting challenging but achievable short-term targets in the context of ambitious long-term goals. Most teachers provide learners with relevant activities which provide stepping stones towards their targets for independence and adulthood.

Managers have worked well with teachers and staff to develop a new approach to the planning of sessions, schemes, and individual targets for learners. They have taken time to ensure that staff understand the reason for the change. Most staff are enthusiastic and competent in target-setting.

Teams of staff work well to assess learners' needs and starting points and to agree ambitious outcomes. Staff make appropriate reference to the learners' education, health and care plans. Teachers and staff use the information from assessment to develop highly individualised targets to ensure that learning promotes progress for each learner. Teachers and staff set targets to encourage incremental progress. As a result, they clearly identify progress made and motivate learners to make the progress of which they are capable.

Through effective planning, learners make good or better progress towards their targets and intended destinations. For example, one learner working in a café achieved his targets to follow instructions and talk with confidence to a customer. Learners in dance sessions took individual roles in line with their targets; one learner led the group in the warm-up exercise and gave clear instructions to others.

Managers, teachers and staff have successfully engaged most learners in planning their own learning. Most learners know and understand their targets and how they relate to their daily life and long-term goals.

Teachers and staff have developed a range of strategies and resources to support learners to evaluate and reflect on their own learning. They use photographs, video, symbols, objects and signs to engage learners with end-of-session and project feedback. Staff have developed the feedback process to ensure that learners of all abilities can evaluate their learning against their targets.

A small number of targets set by teachers do not relate well to the activity and learning taking place. As a result, a very small number of learners make slow progress.

**What progress have teachers made in improving learners' English and mathematical skills through vocational sessions, work placement and supported internships?** **Significant progress**

Teachers and staff extend learners' functional skills in mathematics and English in vocational sessions, work placement, and supported internships.

Managers identify the English and mathematical skills learners can develop during their vocational and academic learning. For example, learners measure materials accurately when working on a project to make a robot at the premises of a local employer. They develop their writing skills when completing their project booklets. Teachers provide appropriate support and correction.

Teachers review and evaluate routinely learners' progress in mathematical skills. For example, learners who are living in supported housing go shopping for their lunch. On completion of the shopping task learners check their receipts, calculate the money they have spent and their change. In another session learners in an independent living session plan and agree food budgets. Learners in the café develop strategies to add up the bill accurately, for example by circling the individual food prices on the order to ensure that they include all the items in the bill prior to calculation.

Teachers and learning support workers develop learners' written and spoken English skills well. Learning support workers use effective questioning to develop learners' communication skills when dealing with customers on their supported internships. Teachers set targets to improve learners' communication by ensuring that they ask customers specific questions. Learners move on to asking more complicated and responsive questions. Learners who have recently started in retail work placements have targets which will support them to build their confidence when talking to work colleagues and customers.

Teachers routinely correct learners' spelling in written work. Teachers support learners to speak and write key words linked to their placements and future careers.

A small number of teachers do not promote the use of capital letters in sentence structure. As a result, a small number of learners write in block capitals, which is not a convention used in employment.

**What progress have managers and teachers made in improving learners' understanding of how to protect themselves from the risks of radicalisation and extremism?** **Reasonable progress**

College managers have planned in depth and taken the time necessary to make sure that the training of learners on the 'Prevent' duty is appropriate to individual groups of learners.

Managers have developed close relationships with the local 'Prevent' board and the local police to ensure that they have good advice on the content and form of training.

Managers have ensured that all staff have been trained in the 'Prevent' duty.

Managers have produced appropriate and thorough risk assessments for each learner prior to the start of training. They have produced good-quality learning materials and are considering a range of different delivery methods to meet the needs of different learners.

An external specialist has trained the first group of six learners. Learners from the first group demonstrate a good understanding of the nature of extremism and radicalisation and how they can keep themselves and others safe online and in the community. Managers have plans and dates for the training of the remaining learners, many of whom have more complex learning needs.

Learners who use the internet know how to stay safe online. Learners know who to contact at college if they feel unsafe.

Learners who are due to leave the college at the end of this year are not yet aware of how to keep themselves safe from risk in their new environment.

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