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Ms Pat Carrington
Principal
City College Peterborough
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Dear Ms Carrington

Short inspection of City College Peterborough

Following the short inspection on 16 and 17 November 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in October 2011.

This provider continues to be good.

You and your leadership team, supported well by the governing body, have maintained the good quality of education and training reported in your last inspection. You still maintain a culture of high expectations and have tackled former weaknesses in relation to outcomes for apprentices well. College leaders support teachers exceptionally well. Combined with the effective performance management of staff at all levels, this helps underpin ongoing improvement.

The work of the college continues to broaden and diversify. Provision reflects well the college's objectives of advancing education, skills and health, relieving poverty, and tackling unemployment. Managers and staff are operating increasingly in a community development role. As a result, more learners, often drawn from disadvantaged groups, are participating in constructive educational and social opportunities. Highly effective employer engagement helps support the improvements seen in the range and quality of apprenticeships and adult skills provision. The 16 to 19 study programme is now well established. Learners speak highly of the pastoral support provided by staff.

The large majority of learners make good progress. Success rates for adult learners studying work-related qualifications have improved over recent years and are very high. Learners from targeted and disadvantaged groups, a college priority, attend regularly with a high proportion successfully completing their course. This is similarly the case for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learners studying English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses achieve well. A minority of apprentices do not make good progress or achieve in two subjects.

Notwithstanding the good level of pastoral support provided to 16 to 19-year-old learners, many of whom are vulnerable and with previous histories of poor educational experiences, attainment of English and mathematics GCSE qualifications is too low and requires improvement.

Teachers plan sessions well and have high expectations of what learners can achieve. Learners value and enjoy sessions. However, there are weaknesses in a minority of teaching, learning and assessment, which you and your managers acknowledge. Managers are not using data effectively enough to monitor and analyse areas for improvement in sufficient detail; for example, in differences in performance across different cohorts of learners. Leaders' data to support the expanding community learning programme, and to assist in measuring its impact, is not yet sufficiently mapped to neighbourhood data and information held by the City Council.

The college has a strong track record in caring for, and engaging with, learners who have had negative experiences of education. Managers and staff, working with local authority officers, are highly responsive to the needs of incoming migrants, asylum seekers and refugees to the city through, for example, family work or language support; they afford these learners dignity and respect.

College leaders and governors work with community partners extremely well. The approach adopted by managers helps develop the capacity of community organisations to support local people into employment and to tackle social isolation effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements remain robust. Managers review all safeguarding policies frequently and ensure they are aligned with those of the local authority in order to ensure that safeguarding actions are coordinated effectively. Staff are diligent in ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to participate in learning in an environment free from bullying, harassment and discrimination. The college's safeguarding team is effective and communicates fully with staff and learners; it is rigorous in managing referrals to full resolution. All staff have taken up relevant 'Prevent' duty training, and demonstrate a high level of awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. They exhibit a good understanding of health and safety requirements.

Inspection findings

- Governors provide good and forward-looking strategic leadership and, in conjunction with college leaders, have ambitious long-term plans for the college to continue to grow and diversify; decisions taken by them are premised accurately on learner and community needs. The recent transfer of the local authority's adult daycare services to the college has already resulted in adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities having greatly improved access to work-related opportunities and education.

- Teachers plan sessions well and have high expectations of what learners can achieve. Weaknesses in a minority of teaching, learning and assessment include: spelling and grammatical errors not being identified in learners' work; teachers assuming, without checking, that learners understand topic matters in sessions; a small minority of teachers not providing sufficient feedback that enables learners to improve their work, or overestimating the levels of learners' spoken English skills. As a result, a minority of learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Staff are skilled in assessing learners' needs on entry and directing learners to appropriate courses that meet their career aspirations. College staff are highly skilled in the pastoral support they provide and use their excellent relationships with learners to support, guide and challenge; as a result, the large majority of learners make good progress and acquire high levels of confidence to continue to develop their skills.
- Since the previous inspection, managers have undertaken detailed work in plotting learners' destinations when they have moved on from college. This work has provided them with additional information about the quality and impact of various programmes and where they may need further improvement.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for learners to consider and discuss contemporary issues and to inform and develop their attitudes and values. They tackle head-on any negative attitudes and actions displayed by learners. New curriculum materials have been developed and trialled to aid learners' understanding of extremism. These have been well received by learners and raised the quality of debate within lessons about, for example, British values.
- Apprenticeship provision has grown significantly over the last few years with overall and timely success rates well above national rates. Apprentices acquire new skills, apply them well in the workplace and are valued highly by employers. Portfolios demonstrate that the work of a large majority of apprentices is of a high standard. Staff ensure that induction is thorough and the demands and expectations of apprenticeships are explained well, including in relation to English and mathematics. Consequently, the large majority of apprentices make good progress. Managers have identified that a minority of apprentices fail to make sufficient progress in health and social care, business administration, and in childcare, and are taking steps to improve achievement rates. Staff enable apprentices to develop the skills needed to succeed at employer interviews. Employers speak highly of this level of preparation and value their working links with college managers; a high proportion provide subsequent employment. Assessors readily support apprentices to overcome personal obstacles to learning, such as accessing childcare. Actions following reviews are communicated well by assessors and acted on quickly and effectively.
- The majority of learners on the 16 to 19 study programme have multiple and complex needs. Teachers have a very good knowledge of learners' individual needs and plan creative activities that learners benefit from and enjoy. Attendance and success rates are high and learners make good progress in English and mathematics. In a minority of instances, teachers do not ensure that learners are sufficiently aware of their personal targets and progress.

- Teachers facilitate good, practical study programme sessions which involve planning meals, shopping and preparing food. These enable learners to work as a team and apply arithmetical calculations. Teachers incorporate work-related tasks into sessions adeptly and enable learners to take up purposeful external or internal work experience. Managers are working with local organisations and charities to develop further the range of work experience options to meet the complex needs of study programme learners. A designated placement officer has recently been appointed to take this work forward.
- As a result of good teaching and coaching, a high proportion of learners studying English as a second language (ESOL) courses achieve particularly well. They go to great lengths to attend, working around shift patterns and family commitments. They gain language skills which they apply in the workplace or, if parents, in their dealings with their children's school. Success rates for learners studying work-related qualifications are also high.
- Managers, in conjunction with the City Council, are highly effective in working with community organisations which support people into employment and tackle social isolation. Courses are developed on the basis of the information provided by such groups. College managers are responsive to community needs; for example they enabled recently arrived Syrian refugees to enrol on English courses in order to improve their English skills. There was a high uptake by refugees on these courses.
- The community learning programme enables learners and local residents to progress to new opportunities. Pathways from community learning into accredited provision are in place; for example, floristry students were asked to create a flower display for the Queen's birthday, and completed their qualification. Leaders are planning further pathways to provide routes for learners to study for formal qualifications. Children's centres host various adult learning courses and act as a base for parents to achieve qualifications such as in paediatric first aid or food hygiene, which helps them to improve their job prospects.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- learners aged 16 to 19 studying on English and mathematics GCSE courses achieve high grades and develop their skills fully
- all teachers promote learners' and apprentices' written English skills effectively, including their use of punctuation, spelling and grammar
- all teachers provide high-quality feedback that enables learners and apprentices to understand what they need to do to improve their work
- managers use data more effectively to identify differences in performance across all groups of learners and ensure all learners and apprentices make good progress
- achievement rates for apprentices in health and social care, business administration and in childcare improve.

I am copying this letter to the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency. The letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tony Gallagher
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection we were assisted by your vice-principal who acted as nominee. We held meetings with you and your management team as well as with council strategic managers and a cross-section of providers. We carried out visits to the two main centres to observe jointly with your managers the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. We spoke with learners and reviewed their work. We also reviewed service documentation including your self-assessment report.