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Mr Ulysses Lyons
Principal
King Edward VI College Nuneaton
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Warwickshire
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Dear Mr Lyons

Short inspection of King Edward VI College Nuneaton

Following the short inspection on 21 and 22 November 2017, 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 college was judged to be good in May 2015.

This provider continues to be good.

You and your senior leadership team have ensured that students continue to receive and benefit from a good standard of education and training.

As a result of the actions you have taken, the proportion of students who successfully gain their qualifications has risen in each successive year since the last inspection. Students achieve particularly well on advanced-level vocational courses, and most students studying at AS level make good progress and meet or exceed their target grades. Results for the few students who retake GCSEs in English are very high and improving year on year. Similarly, the number of students who progress onto a range of positive employment, education and training destinations, including higher education, is exceptionally high. You have correctly identified that improvements are required to raise the quality of your GCSE mathematics provision and to improve quickly the progress that students studying at A2 level make from their initial starting points. Early indications at the time of this inspection were that the interventions that you and your team have put in place are starting to improve the standard of provision in these two key areas for the college. This will require close scrutiny by you and governors to ensure that this improvement is maintained over time.

You and your team have ensured that teaching, learning and assessment remain good across the large majority of lessons and, as a result, students' attendance at lessons is high. Teachers are skilled in, and knowledgeable about, their individual subjects. They use their expertise very effectively to provide well-planned lesson

activities which motivate and interest students and result in them acquiring suitable knowledge and developing good academic and vocational skills. In many lessons, teachers use a range of approaches very effectively to check students' understanding. Most verbal and written feedback to students on their assignments provides clear guidance on what they need to do to improve. Teachers' good support and the sound advice they offer during lessons and in tutorials are ensuring that more students make the progress expected of them.

Leaders and managers have maintained effective arrangements for observing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Observations carried out by your team of observers accurately identify strengths and areas for improvement across all aspects of your provision and provide managers with a clear understanding of the performance of individual teachers. Performance management arrangements are used well to support and challenge staff in meeting the high expectations set by leaders. Staff unable to meet these expectations following support quickly leave the college. Teachers benefit from targeted professional development to improve their practice.

Since being appointed, you have made good progress in addressing most of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection, although a few areas for improvement still remain unresolved. For example, students have too little access to work placements and visits to employers to extend their knowledge and understanding of the workplace. In addition, a small minority of teaching and learning is still not challenging enough, particularly for the most able students. You and your senior leadership team are aware that these aspects still require improvement and have appropriately detailed plans in place to bring about the required transformation.

With the support of governors, you and your senior leadership team have used the recommendations arising from the area review for Coventry and Warwickshire to undertake a strategic evaluation of the college's future as an independent institution. At the time of the inspection, you and governors were at an advanced stage of planning for the college to enter into a sixth-form college multi-academy trust arrangement with a local university.

You and your leadership team have worked closely with the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership and with other stakeholders to ensure that the curriculum offered to students is responsive to local and regional priorities and demands. You have recently refreshed the range of courses offered to students by introducing new academic programmes in financial studies and computing science, and vocational courses in medical science, criminology and media. In addition, you have aligned all of your courses to one of six clearly defined curriculum pathways. These are well designed to support academic and employability progression opportunities, enabling students to make informed next-step career choices.

Governors continue to provide rigorous challenge and high levels of support to you and your senior leadership team in your collective determination to improve the

quality of teaching and learning and to raise standards and performance across the college. They closely scrutinise and interrogate information they receive on all aspects of the college's performance and compare this against the challenging targets they have set in the college's key performance dashboard. They have good insight into where teaching and learning are good and where they require improvement. For example, they closely question and review the termly standards review panel reports presented by heads of faculty. They compare the reported performance on students' attendance, retention and their academic and vocational progress and achievement with target expectations over time – and seek explanations for any underperformance.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the college, underpinned by regular staff training. Governors, managers and staff have been appropriately trained on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. They benefit from regular updates that keep their knowledge and understanding of these important aspects current and up to date.

Strong links and close collaboration with local support agencies, including Warwickshire County Council, Warwickshire Police and third-sector agencies, have ensured that safeguarding arrangements continue to be effective. You and your safeguarding team ensure that you make skilful use of local information-sharing protocols between safeguarding partners. As a result, students feel safe.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements continue to be fit for purpose and that protocols for checking the suitability of new staff are effective. Senior managers ensure that all staff focus sufficiently on promoting suitable health and safety practices around the college to ensure that the environment is safe. Staff across the college keep a watchful eye on the personal development of all students, allowing them to spot quickly any concerns with individuals or groups that may indicate that they are at risk and/or in need of support. The safeguarding team continues to ensure that vulnerable students who are identified as being at risk, such as those with mental health support needs and children in care, receive good support and thrive at the college.

Safeguarding records are detailed and of a high quality. Governors receive regular safeguarding updates and a detailed and informative annual safeguarding report. They take good note of student surveys and of students' representation on the board to triangulate their understanding as to the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. While students are well informed about online safety and cyber bullying, their knowledge of the threats posed by radicalisation and extremism is too basic and requires further development.

Inspection findings

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, resulting in an increasing proportion of students achieving their qualifications and almost all progressing either to employment or further study. Well-planned lessons and strong support from most teachers contribute significantly to students' success and progress.
- Since the last inspection, when the college was judged to be good, students' overall success in classroom-based provision has shown a steady improvement and compares well with similar providers. Students working towards vocational level 3 qualifications and those retaking their GCSE in English achieve very well. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs benefit from good, targeted support which significantly contributes to their high levels of success. The large majority of students at AS level successfully reach their aspirational targets. Similarly, the proportion of A-level students who achieve their qualifications has improved and is now in line with similar providers nationally. However, too few reach their aspirational targets. In addition, achievement rates for the few students taking GCSE mathematics declined sharply in 2016/17, and so require improvement.
- Leaders have accurately identified the reasons why too few students at A2 level made good progress in line with their identified potential and why performance in GCSE mathematics declined. They have implemented an appropriate range of strategies to bring about improvement, which are beginning to have a positive impact. Current students are well motivated, developing high levels of skills and making secure progress in their studies.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subject and, in the large majority of lessons, inspire students to learn and improve their knowledge and skills. Teachers assess students' written work accurately and promptly. Staff use the results of initial assessment well to identify accurately students' skills and knowledge, including any additional learning needs. They then plan their lessons well and these are effective in engaging and promoting learning for students of all abilities.
- In a small minority of lessons, students make slower progress because teachers move too quickly from one planned learning activity to another. In these lessons, planning to meet the individual needs of students is not always good enough, and teachers do not use a sufficiently wide range of strategies to challenge students appropriately and to check that students, including the most able, consistently develop a deeper understanding of the topic under discussion.
- Students' written work is of a good standard and teachers promote literacy and communication skills well in the majority of lessons. As a result, students develop very good written English skills. The great majority of written feedback is comprehensive and includes detailed advice as to what students need to do to improve, as well as the importance of correct spelling, punctuation and grammar in their written work. Students receive frequent, helpful verbal feedback and support during lessons, which give both encouragement and clear guidance for improvement. However, teachers do not ensure that students have fully understood and can apply mathematical concepts well within their lessons, which

hinders students' progress in the development of their numeracy skills.

- Students' behaviour is good. They are courteous and respectful to teachers and to each other, and they support each other well in classrooms and during other learning activities. They have very positive attitudes to learning, with high levels of attendance, and most students are punctual for lessons. They take pride in their work and are able to discuss their subject with confidence. Following the recent reintroduction of a college-wide enrichment programme, in which most students participate, they develop good personal and social skills and qualities, such as personal presentation and teamworking skills. Almost all students improve their self-confidence and raise their expectations in their personal lives and future aspirations, but too few vocational students develop work-related skills through participation in external work experience.
- Leaders have ensured that students receive good help and advice about staying safe through induction, counselling and tutorials that reflect the culture and ethos of the college. Teachers encourage students to enter debate around their subject area in lessons. A few are confident to open discussions which allow students to explore and debate topics related to fundamental British values. However, a small minority of students do not have a sufficiently well-developed understanding as to the dangers that extremism and radicalisation may pose to their own well-being and that of wider society.
- Performance management of staff at all levels at the college is rigorous but supportive. Leaders have taken appropriate action when teachers have failed to respond appropriately to support and staff development. Managers have effective arrangements for identifying the key strengths and areas for improvement when observing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders have implemented a sharply focused professional development schedule to drive improvements in the quality of the students' experience. The recent establishment of a cross-college teaching and learning community support network provides teachers with access to a range of effective individual support options to develop their teaching and to aid in the sharing of best practice. Despite this, too few teachers critically reflect on their own performance and how it can be further improved.
- Leaders and governors continue to strongly value students' feedback and use a range of well-organised approaches to gather their views. Since the previous inspection, membership of the college's senior leadership team has benefited from representation from two members of the student executive who ensure that the views of students are taken very seriously by leaders and managers. Students value the timely responses and improvements that result from their contribution and feedback, for example the recent decision taken by leaders to appoint a full-time employability officer in order to strengthen opportunities for more external work-related experience to be included within students' courses.
- Leaders work successfully with a broad range of organisations, including higher education institutions, the local authority and the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership, to ensure that the college's education provision remains very responsive to local and regional priorities. Leaders and managers use local information well to plan and develop the curriculum and to ensure that

current courses are closely aligned to the current and future needs of the local and regional economy in key priority skill areas such as business enterprise, health science and computing.

- Governors scrutinise reports on all aspects of college performance thoroughly and understand well where further improvements are required. They question senior leaders effectively on the pace of improvement, monitor the impact of training and development for teachers and review the effectiveness of managing any staff underperformance. Governors play a significant role in shaping the current strategic direction of the college, including reviewing the recommendations arising from the recent area review for Coventry and Warwickshire. Leaders are setting up a multi-academy trust with a local higher education institution.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- good practice from teachers and curriculum areas where teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good is rapidly spread and adopted across the college, so that more students – particularly those studying at A2 level – are supported to make consistently good progress, successfully achieve their qualifications and meet or exceed their target grades
- teachers plan lessons that take into account all the information available about students' prior attainment, skills and knowledge to plan learning that enables them all, especially the most able, to make good or better progress in lessons
- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics rapidly improves, so that students receive routine challenge to develop higher-level mathematics skills, such as using and understanding appropriate mathematical vocabulary in problem-solving
- the proportion of students who achieve their mathematics qualifications, including high grades at GCSE level, mirrors the high rates achieved in GCSE English
- all students develop their work-related skills through regular opportunities to participate in appropriately challenging and purposeful work experience and work-related enrichment activities
- all students routinely benefit from more interesting and effective promotion of the topic of life in modern Britain and of the threats posed by radicalisation and extremism, so that they have a secure understanding of how these aspects apply to themselves as individuals and the wider communities in which they live.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will

be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Victor Reid
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the vice principal, as nominee, assisted the team. We held meetings with you, your senior leaders, representatives from the governing body, managers, teaching staff and students. We observed teaching, learning and assessment with members of your staff. We reviewed key documents, including those relating to the college's strategy, self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of students by reviewing the comments received on Ofsted's online questionnaires, from your own student survey and by seeking the views of students during on-site inspection activity.