

# Oaklands College

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

---

**Unique reference number:** 130723

**Name of lead inspector:** Russ Henry, HMI

**Inspection date(s):** 3 April 2019

**Type of provider:** General further education college

**Address:** Oaklands Campus  
Hatfield Road  
St. Albans  
Hertfordshire  
AL4 0JA



## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Oaklands College was inspected in April 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.

Oaklands College is a large general further education college with campuses in St Albans and Welwyn Garden City. It provides classroom-based programmes in a wide range of subjects for learners aged 16 to 18 and adults. It also provides apprenticeship programmes throughout Hertfordshire and surrounding areas. The largest number of apprentices are in manufacturing, engineering, construction, horticulture, agriculture and administration.

### Themes

#### **How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that teachers have high expectations of learners and apprentices, and provide activities that stretch and motivate them?    Insufficient progress**

Attendance remains too low, especially in English and mathematics lessons for younger learners. Although managers and staff know which learners and groups of learners have low attendance, their improvement actions have met with limited success. They have not achieved their own modest targets for improvement. Learners are not developing a key behaviour required to sustain employment.

In the small number of English and mathematics lessons observed during the visit, teaching failed to provide learners with an appropriate level of challenge. In some instances, work was clearly too difficult for learners. They were unable to answer questions and teachers did little to check whether they had understood topics. Teachers failed to identify or address obvious misconceptions. In other cases, the work was not challenging enough.

The quality of work produced by apprentices, particularly at levels 3 and 4, does not reflect the standards required by employers. Assessors' feedback on completed work does not contain the specific guidance required to promote improvements or to challenge apprentices to work to their full potential. Apprentices' progress reviews focus too much on the completion of units and not enough on the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Vocational sessions observed during the visit were well planned, methodical and clearly sat within a logical sequence of lessons intended to progressively develop

learners' understanding. Vocational teachers know that they need to provide an appropriate level of challenge for learners, and do so to a reasonable extent, but they need to develop this further.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in improving the performance of those staff whose learners' and apprentices' progress and outcomes are not good enough?** **Reasonable progress**

Managers are better equipped to improve the performance of staff as a result of extensive training in leadership, coaching and mentoring, and performance management. A number of managers who were unable meet the required standard of performance have left the college.

Leaders have improved the processes for assessing the quality of teaching through lesson observation. They now observe staff at least twice per year and observers make a judgement as to whether the teacher has met the expected standards. Observations lead to the development of action plans to address the weaknesses identified in teachers' practice. An increased number of 'Quality Improvement Facilitators' coach staff to help them to improve.

Leaders have revised appraisal processes so that managers focus increasingly on actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Where teachers have significant weaknesses in their practice and do not make the required improvements, managers use capability processes effectively to support their further improvement. On the occasions where this does not work, staff leave the college.

Managers have introduced a revised curriculum audit process that they apply rigorously. Through this process, they identify appropriate areas for improvement and develop action plans to address these weaknesses. Managers monitor these action plans, but it is too early to judge the impact of this process.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners and apprentices are safe, and know how to keep themselves safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism?** **Reasonable progress**

Managers and staff have introduced an improved curriculum to help learners and apprentices to understand the safeguarding risks they may face at college, in the workplace and in their personal lives. They use online resources to support learners and apprentices to develop their understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. A well-planned tutorial programme makes time for staff to revisit these themes throughout the year, using materials tailored to the differing abilities of learners.

Learners aged 16 to 18 develop a reasonable understanding of topics such as how to remain safe online. Although they can recall having completed activities related to radicalisation and extremism, their understanding of these risks is limited.

Apprentices follow health and safety guidance well and feel safe at college and in their workplaces. However, their understanding of wider safeguarding themes is mixed, despite the training they have received.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in providing governors with the information they need to support and challenge them effectively?** **Reasonable progress**

Leaders now provide governors with more detailed reports regarding the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the attendance and progress of learners and apprentices. These include reports on the outcomes of lesson observations and progress against the post-inspection action plan. Governors also have access to an online dashboard that shows them real-time information. This helps to equip them with the information they need to function effectively in their roles.

Governors recognise that, before the previous inspection, they placed insufficient focus on improving the quality of provision. They have acted to address this by, for example, taking part in learning walks and in the validation of departmental and whole-college self-assessments. They spend more time at corporation meetings discussing and understanding information about teaching, learning and assessment. They have established a small quality advisory group to support this activity. As a result, governors challenge senior leaders effectively about quality issues and this results in improvements. For example, their discussions have resulted in leaders and managers increasing the rigour of procedures that teachers follow when predicting learners' outcomes.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in improving the monitoring of learners' and apprentices' progress and in helping those who are behind schedule to catch up?** **Reasonable progress**

Managers now monitor the progress of learners and apprentices well. They use live dashboards of information to gain an overview of performance. They can drill down into this data to understand underlying issues. Managers also use key performance indicator reports that provide appropriate and detailed information.

Managers and staff use an electronic system to monitor the progress of individual learners. They use this system to identify those who are at risk of not achieving and have a separate system for identifying those who may not achieve the grades of which they are capable. Although they identify learners whose performance is a cause for concern, they are less effective at resolving these concerns. Staff do not establish clear action plans to support learners and, consequently, learners seldom make the necessary improvements.

Managers monitor the progress of apprentices appropriately. At present, they use a range of systems to keep track of apprentices' progress, but they consolidate the information provided by these systems into a single spreadsheet. This provides them

with a clear and comprehensible record. Managers recognise that this is not ideal and are in the process of introducing a new electronic tool which they expect to simplify processes.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Learner View**

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to [www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Employer View**

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to [www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2019