

# The Maltings College

## Follow up re-inspection monitoring visit report

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

This is the second follow up re-inspection monitoring visit to The Maltings College following publication of the inspection report on 25 February 2015, which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

Since the previous visit in March 2015 the Principal and several governors have resigned. An Acting Principal who is the Principal of a local academy trust has been appointed on a short-term basis. Senior leaders at the academy trust are providing additional management support, particularly with regard to teaching and learning and finance. A permanent senior manager with responsibility for quality and operations took up post in April 2015. The chair of governors remains in post and the governing body currently includes three governors from the local academy trust.

### Themes

#### Improvement in outcomes for students

Teachers are working with current students to ensure that vocational qualifications are completed this year, and in several areas above-average pass rates are anticipated. However, low retention rates mean that success rates are likely to remain below average in many areas. Factors contributing to poor retention, such as inappropriate initial advice and guidance, are being addressed for the September 2015 intake. Entry criteria have been clarified to ensure that in future students are able to cope with the demands of the courses they enrol on.

Few students have had external work experience. Teachers do not develop employability skills consistently and effectively in all lessons. For example, not all teachers routinely challenge lateness. In areas such as the motor vehicle workshop and catering kitchen, teachers do not give sufficient emphasis to standards of best practice.

Student dropout was more rapid prior to the inspection in January than since. Attendance has improved since the inspection although it falls short of the college target. Attendance at English and mathematics lessons is particularly poor. Pass rates for functional skills English and mathematics examinations taken to date are low in many cases.

#### Insufficient improvement for learners

## **Improvement in English and mathematics provision**

Following the inspection, leaders moved to rectify weaknesses in English and mathematics through the appointment of additional teachers and timetable changes. Despite this, the experience of students has yet to improve significantly. English and mathematics teachers pay insufficient attention to the existing skills and knowledge of students. They often pitch their lessons at the wrong level and fail to meet the different needs of individual students. Teachers do not do enough to contextualise learning and, as a result, students are unable to make links between English and mathematics and their vocational studies. Teachers often provide unimaginative lessons and their explanations of topics lack detail and clarity.

Mathematics teachers do not always demonstrate sufficient understanding of mathematical concepts to allow them to explain key principles clearly to students. As a result students' progress in mathematics is slow. Managers have not yet provided adequate training to help vocational staff include English and mathematics within teaching, learning and assessment. Although many vocational teachers have developed a greater awareness of the importance of English and mathematics, few successfully embed these subjects within their lessons.

## **Insufficient improvement for learners**

### **Improvement in teaching, learning, and assessment**

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains too variable across the college and not enough has been done to improve all teachers' skills and to share good practice. Action plans to support individual teachers to improve were not implemented quickly enough or monitored well prior to the arrival of the new leadership group. The new leadership group has increased the rigour of lesson observations and learning walks. These observations have identified clearly areas for improvement for individual teachers and also more general weaknesses that apply to many lessons. A professional development programme to remedy these for all teachers is in the early stages, and many weaknesses identified at the time of the full inspection, remain.

Teachers use different formats for lesson planning and some are not fit for purpose. For example, in some lessons the aims and objectives are not sufficiently clear, especially with regard to the subject specific material students should learn. Schemes of work also lack detail. A few teachers are responding to recent training events on questioning by adapting and improving their practice, but this is not consistent across all areas and several examples of poor questioning techniques were observed during the inspection. Some lessons do not include enough variety of activity, for example, overlong lessons devoted to completion of portfolio work, with too little evidence of learning or progress. Teachers' skill in monitoring individuals' progress during lessons is variable, and not all teachers intervene in a timely or appropriate

manner. Pace in lessons is often too slow. In many lessons teachers do not set time limits on activities or ensure that the more able learners are challenged effectively.

There are some examples of more effective practical vocational skills development in lessons, including the development of employability skills. For example, in hairdressing and beauty therapy students take turns to act as salon manager.

English and mathematics are not taught effectively. Vocational teachers' skills in these subjects require further development. Vocational lessons do not given enough attention to developing English and mathematics skills, especially written English skills.

Most teachers have appropriate records of student progress. Students value the support and encouragement they receive. Good relationships between teachers and students are having a positive impact on personal development. Teachers are focusing on ensuring that current students complete their vocational qualifications before the end of the academic year and are committed to supporting them to do so.

### **Insufficient improvement for learners**

#### **Improvement in governance, leadership and the quality assurance arrangements**

The previous management team initiated some actions in the period immediately following the inspection. Attendance was tackled vigorously and improved. Teachers of English and mathematics were appointed, but this has not produced the expected improvements. Arrangements to improve independent careers advice were put in place.

Since the appointment of the Acting Principal in April the pace of change has accelerated and a wider range of initiatives is now in place to drive up the quality of provision. The Acting Principal has set out to raise expectations and standards, and to establish a learning culture better focused on preparing students for future employment or the next stage of their education. The new senior manager with responsibility for quality and operations took up post in April and additional management support is being provided from the local academy. These are all contributing to authoritative, firm and decisive leadership and are enabling the college to make progress at a more rapid pace.

Managers have clarified and reinforced college policies on issues such as behaviour and are ensuring that teachers are applying these more consistently. Quality assurance arrangements are being implemented with increasing rigour. Managers are monitoring and following up assiduously teachers' compliance in areas such as the tutorial programme. Improved systems have been put in place to collate and analyse the assessment data collected at key points during the year. These are helping to ensure that managers and teachers have access to relevant data so that they can

take swift action to address slow progress or underachievement. A performance management system has been introduced. This will review teachers' performance, taking into consideration a range of measures including student outcomes. The post-inspection and quality improvement plan has been revised to strengthen the focus on action to rectify key weaknesses. Underpinning this are subject area improvement plans produced by middle managers. Senior managers are taking a vigilant approach to meeting deadlines to ensure that delays in taking the necessary actions are avoided. The impact of these well-considered actions is beginning to be seen but it is too early to judge their full success.

Using support from senior staff from the local academy, a programme of professional development has been established, focusing on key themes for the development of all teachers' classroom and workshop practice. Initial training sessions on questioning techniques have taken place. This is beginning to have a positive impact.

As part of a curriculum review the new leadership group has reviewed the performance of subcontractors. As a result, arrangements with several subcontractors are to end this year. Negotiations are ongoing with the few remaining subcontractors to clarify responsibilities and quality assurance arrangements for next year to ensure that provision is of high quality.

The newly constituted governing body receives timely and detailed information from the Acting Principal, and governors have a good understanding of the issues facing the college and the areas for improvement. They are highly committed to the college.

### **Reasonable improvement for learners**

#### **Improvement in the tutorial programme and careers education and guidance**

The current tutorial programme includes a limited number of appropriate topics to help students develop their understanding of a range of themes such as online safety, British values and social skills. However, the programme lacks breadth and is poorly organised. Tutors do not follow the college programme consistently, with examples of tutors missing out important topics and others adding themes of their own. Tutors monitor the progress of their students and they record the outcomes of progress reviews in students' individual learning plans. Tutors work with their students to set individual targets for improvement. However, these targets are often insufficiently specific or measurable and, because of this, do not contribute sufficiently to students' progress.

Since the inspection, managers have recognised that pre-enrolment information, advice and guidance have not been good enough and that a number of students were enrolled onto inappropriate courses. The new leadership group has reviewed entry requirements for all courses for the 2015/16 academic year. These changes

mean that some applicants who have already been accepted onto courses no longer meet the entry requirements and staff are in the process of contacting these young people to discuss the options available to them. For a small number of courses, such as level 2 childcare, managers have not considered entry requirements and future progression routes in enough detail. This means there is a risk that students who complete these programmes will have few opportunities for progression available to them.

Managers have engaged the services of an external agency to provide independent careers advice to existing students. The availability of this service has been limited and many students have not yet received appropriate support. Vocational tutors do not provide their students with enough guidance to help them prepare for future employment. Managers are currently redeveloping the tutorial programme to ensure that weaknesses are addressed in 2015/16.

### **Insufficient improvement for learners**

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