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Mr John Spindler
CEO/Principal
Salford City College
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Dear Mr Spindler

Short inspection of Salford City College

Following the short inspection on 25 and 26 November 2015, 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 2010.

This provider continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education and training in the college since the previous inspection. You place a strong focus on improving provision in all areas through accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and through a wide range of effective actions to enhance the skills and performance of teaching staff, including relevant and comprehensive training and development. As a result, a high proportion of learners and apprentices complete their programmes successfully. Current learners and apprentices are making good progress towards achieving their targets and their qualifications.

You, your senior leaders and governors have a clear and ambitious strategy for the college to be fully responsive to local needs and priorities, and to ensure the college's future sustainability. Very strong partnerships with employers, the local authority, the Chamber of Commerce and the Salford City Partnership enable you to develop the curriculum in response to the demand for skills locally, particularly in the major MediaCityUK development in Salford. Your new FutureSkills Centre of Excellence located on the MediaCityUK site provides courses and apprenticeships in areas such as media, music technology, and accountancy and finance that meet employers' needs.

Governors have a wide range of relevant experience and take a very active role in the life of the college. They know the college well, and are passionate about ensuring that it provides high-quality education and training for the people of Salford.

Governors use the detailed information that they receive about the college's strategic direction and its performance to provide strong support and challenge to you and your leadership team.

You have introduced study programmes successfully, and these meet the individual needs and career ambitions of younger learners well. Study programmes include a strong focus on developing the skills that learners will need for work through a wide range of work-related activity. High-quality teaching, learning and assessment enable most learners to make good progress in improving their vocational and academic skills. Learners make particularly good progress in developing their personal skills and confidence. They have a very positive attitude towards their studies, and work hard to achieve their target grades.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified areas for improvement in work-based learning, including the quality of support and the process for reviewing learners' progress. You and your managers have acted decisively to improve the quality of the apprenticeship programme. This has resulted in a significant increase in the proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their programme in the planned time.

Safeguarding is effective.

Very experienced, appropriately trained and highly committed senior safeguarding staff investigate thoroughly and respond effectively to all safeguarding concerns. Managers work closely with agencies including social services to identify and ensure the safety of vulnerable learners. All staff and governors receive regular and relevant training on all aspects of safeguarding. Learners feel safe and know how to refer any concerns that they have. Keeping safe is a key theme in tutorials and, as a result, learners know how to protect themselves from risk.

All staff and governors are fully aware of the risk of radicalisation and extremism, and have received comprehensive training on the Prevent strategy. The college works closely with external agencies including the police to identify and tackle potential risks.

Standards of behaviour and the level of mutual respect in the college are very high. The number of recorded incidents of bullying and harassment is low, and any incidents are tackled appropriately by college staff.

Inspection findings

- Leaders, governors, and managers evaluate accurately the quality of provision and take action swiftly to improve weaker aspects. They work closely and successfully with a wide range of partners to shape the curriculum and enhance resources to meet local needs and priorities. However, information about learners' and apprentices' destinations is incomplete, and, as a result, leaders and managers are not able to evaluate fully the impact of their strategy to meet local needs.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. This enables the large majority of learners to make good progress from their starting points and achieve the qualifications and skills they need for further learning and employment. Teachers use a wide range of interesting and relevant activities that motivate learners and enable them to improve their skills and knowledge quickly. They use probing questions well to extend learners' understanding and successfully encourage peer support among learners.
- On a small minority of vocational courses, the process for recording the outcomes of the assessment of learners' work that contributes to their final grade is insufficiently rigorous. While the progress that learners make on advanced-level courses is good overall, the rate of progress varies significantly within subjects across college sites, and is too slow on a small minority of courses at some of the sites.
- The great majority of learners know what they need to do to improve their work and to make good progress. Teachers monitor well the progress that learners make and provide detailed and helpful feedback. Learners who fall behind receive additional support quickly to help them to catch up. On a few courses, targets set in tutorials do not specify clearly enough what learners need to do next to improve their work.
- Learners on the study programme make very good progress in developing the personal skills and self-confidence that they will need as they progress to their next steps. All learners participate in work-related activities including work placements that help them to improve the skills that they need for work. Learners benefit from good careers guidance that includes innovative activities to enable them to gain useful insights into the work of local employers and the programmes offered by higher education institutions.
- Most learners make good progress in improving their English and mathematics skills. In the majority of vocational and academic lessons, teachers successfully develop the skills that learners need for work and future study. On functional skills courses, the large majority of learners improve their skills quickly and achieve their qualifications. The majority of learners on GCSE English courses make good progress and achieve their target grades. On GCSE mathematics courses, too many learners make insufficient progress and, as a result, too few achieve a grade C or higher.
- The college provides an apprenticeship programme that meets the needs of

employers and apprentices very well. Local employers take an active role in the design and delivery of programmes. Apprentices benefit from high-quality training and assessment, including particularly good individual support, that enable them to acquire the skills and knowledge that they need to meet the professional standards in their occupational area. As a result, most apprentices complete their programme successfully. Employers are very positive about the contribution that apprentices make to the success of their business.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- they collect and analyse comprehensive information about the destinations of learners and apprentices once they have completed their programmes so that they are able to measure the impact of provision on learners' and apprentices' future success and to evaluate the effectiveness of the college's strategy to meet local needs and priorities
- the process for recording the outcomes of the assessment of learners' work that contributes to their final grade is consistently rigorous on all courses
- targets that teachers set in tutorials on the study programme always specify clearly what learners need to do next to improve their work
- they identify the reasons for the slow progress that a minority of learners make on advanced-level study programmes in subjects at specific college sites, and take action to improve it
- they improve the quality of provision on GCSE mathematics courses so that a much higher proportion of learners achieve a pass at grade C or above.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Hailstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection the team was assisted by the Deputy Principal as nominee. We held meetings with you, your senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, managers, teaching staff, partners and learners. We visited your five sites with members of your staff to observe teaching, learning and assessment and to look at learners' work. We spoke with learners at all sites. We reviewed key documents

including those relating to the college's strategy, self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of learners by reviewing the comments received on Ofsted's online questionnaires, from your own learner survey and by seeking the views of learners during on-site inspection activity.