

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs Maria Thompson
Principal and Chief Executive
Havering College of Further and Higher Education
Ardleigh Green Road
Hornchurch
Essex
RM11 2LL

Dear Mrs Thompson

Short inspection of Havering College of Further and Higher Education

Following the short inspection on 13–14 January 2016 I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in February 2011.

This provider continues to be good.

Governors and senior leaders have successfully maintained the good quality of provision seen at the previous inspection. You and your senior leaders have very successfully instilled in staff and learners an ethos of collaboration and high expectations. With the governors and senior leaders, you have set a strategic direction for the college which focuses strongly on helping learners raise their aspirations and which is very closely aligned with the needs of local communities and businesses.

The proportion of learners who successfully complete their qualifications has risen since the previous inspection and is high, particularly for adults, and learners enjoy studying at the welcoming and friendly campuses. The proportion of learners who go on to study at a higher level of learning, or who gain jobs, is also high.

Governors, senior leaders and managers have a very good overview of the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching, learning and assessment and learners' outcomes. Where problems have arisen, managers have been quick to take action and have successfully reversed any declining trends in performance. At all levels of the organisation, staff focus strongly on taking actions that improve the learners' experiences at college. Staff use feedback from learners very effectively both to understand concerns learners may have about their programmes and also to evaluate the success of the actions taken to bring about improvement.

Managers have responded well to the requirements of 16 to 19 study programmes. They have implemented successful strategies to ensure learners have a comprehensive understanding of the world of work. Staff use their extensive connections with employers to enable learners in all subjects to participate in a wide variety of activities such as enterprise events, work experience and workshops from industry experts.

Since the previous inspection, you and your managers have maintained your excellent collaboration with employers and local community stakeholders. Managers use their involvement in the Havering Learning Partnership with local schools and colleges very effectively to ensure that the college offers an appropriate range of courses, avoids duplication within the borough and allows learners to progress to higher learning. Through highly imaginative projects, such as the annual musical theatre performance produced in collaboration with local schools and community groups, the college makes a substantial contribution to the local community.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors, senior leaders and managers have taken highly effective action to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that learners are safe at the college's three campuses. Staff ensure that effective arrangements are in place for learners on work experience and for apprentices in the workplace. Learners report that they feel safe and that the college has a strong culture of respect. Staff provide particularly impressive training for learners about how to use the internet with regard to their personal safety. Managers have excellent security and monitoring arrangements of their information technology systems to ensure that learners stay safe when working online.

Managers maintain a comprehensive overview of the progress of learners made vulnerable by their circumstances, including care leavers, those with health concerns, learners with learning difficulties and disabled learners. They ensure that effective arrangements are in place to keep these learners safe and help them to achieve. Managers have implemented their obligations under the 'Prevent' duty well, with comprehensive staff training, and training for learners which ensures they have a good understanding of British values and the dangers of radicalisation. Managers have been diligent in ensuring that training takes into account local risks as well as broader national themes.

Inspection findings

- Managers use data very well to monitor the progress of learners across all of their provision and in most cases quickly identify any areas of underperformance. In the 2014/15 academic year managers recognised that learners on a minority of courses, including in health and social care, engineering and manufacturing technology, hairdressing, beauty therapy and business, were not achieving as well as in the previous year. The actions they took focused well on resolving staffing issues and raising the

quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Advanced practitioners provided effective support to teachers, and managers made good use of staff development days to bring about improvements. As a result, a high proportion of learners successfully completed their qualifications.

- At the previous inspection the programmes for disabled learners and learners with learning difficulties were judged to be outstanding. Staff have maintained the excellent standard of these programmes, and further extended the experiences and opportunities for learners by enabling them to study a wide range of vocational subjects. Teachers and support staff are very skilled at identifying the needs of learners and providing high-quality support to ensure that learners are successful. Staff use their excellent links with employers expertly to manage work experience and supported internships for learners who are not yet ready to study at level 2. This helps learners to develop their confidence and competence in a wide range of skills to prepare them for further study or work.
- Governors and senior leaders recognise the need to improve further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment on GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics in order to ensure that more learners achieve at least a grade C. They have an appropriate action plan in place and have worked well to recruit experienced teachers and to eradicate the problems created by an over-reliance on temporary staff in the previous year. Governors, leaders and managers monitor the impact of their improvement actions very carefully and current learners are making satisfactory progress. However, learners' attendance at GCSE English and mathematics lessons, while better than in the previous year, is lower than for other subjects and requires improvement.
- At the time of the previous inspection the proportion of apprentices successfully completing their programmes was comparable to similar providers. This has remained the case and in 2014/15 governors and senior leaders recognised the need to restructure the management and teaching of apprenticeships to ensure more apprentices are successful and complete their qualifications within the planned time. Leaders have successfully strengthened the management of apprenticeships and governors have a good overview of the effectiveness of this and its impact on apprentices' outcomes. Managers monitor the progress of apprentices more thoroughly and the introduction of online portfolios has helped assessors and managers support apprentices to make good progress. Staff have prioritised the teaching of English and mathematics and apprentices now successfully complete functional skills qualifications in these subjects earlier in their programmes. In a minority of cases assessors do not use targets with apprentices well enough to help them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- When managers evaluate the provision they use data well to review the performance of different groups of learners and in most cases few performance gaps exist. However, in 2014/15, male learners on study programmes achieved less well than females. Within curriculum areas,

managers have introduced activities to support the success of groups of male learners, such as the 'real men' group held at the Rainham campus, but governors and senior leaders do not have a sufficient overview of these initiatives and their effect on male learners' achievements so far this year.

- Managers have put in place effective staff development to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment remain good. Managers identify teachers' and assessors' strengths and areas for improvement well and make good use of the skills of the most-able staff to share good practice. Staff use weekly team meetings as a useful forum for sharing ideas and supporting each other to try out new techniques within lessons. By using well-planned staff development events and effective coaching of teams and individual teachers, managers have ensured that teachers develop their skills in line with emerging priorities, such as improving learners' skills in English and mathematics. However, teachers are not all sufficiently skilled at setting work that is demanding enough for all learners so that they make the progress expected of them in relation to their starting points.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- they continue to improve the teaching of GCSE English and mathematics so that more learners achieve at least a grade C
- all assessors use targets with apprentices in order to help them make good progress and so that a higher proportion achieve their qualifications in the planned time
- they monitor more thoroughly the performance of different groups of learners in-year to ensure that, where differences exist, actions to address them are successful
- all teachers have the skills to set work that matches the abilities of different learners so that more of them achieve or exceed their target grades.

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

Rieks Drijver
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Ofsted Inspectors. We were assisted by the vice principal as nominee. We visited three college sites to observe teaching, learning and assessments and to look at learners' work. We met with learners, governors, senior leaders, managers and teachers and visited apprentices and employers in the workplace. We reviewed key documents, including the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, data related to the performance of learners currently on programmes and those related to safeguarding. We considered the views of learners and employers by reviewing the results of Ofsted's online questionnaires.