

Marine Society College

Specialist designated institution

20–22 January 2016

Inspection dates**Overall effectiveness****Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Many developments to improve provision are at an early stage and it is too soon to measure their full impact.
- The most recent full-year qualification achievement and retention rates are still too low.
- Managers' recording of the progress made by learners who do not complete courses, but move forward personally and/or professionally, is not effective.
- For a minority of learners, their tutor's feedback on completed assignments is of variable quality. In a small minority of cases, feedback is not recorded at all.
- Identification of, and resourcing for, additional learning support to meet individual learning needs such as literacy and numeracy skills development or to tackle other barriers to learning, are not effective.
- The monitoring of learners' progression into higher-level courses, or increased responsibility within their current work roles or careers, is insufficient. As a result, managers do not know learners' destinations on completion of their courses or withdrawal.

The provider has the following strengths

- Actions to improve the quality of provision since the previous inspection, helped by increased human resources, are clear and starting to be effective.
- Subcontracting arrangements for the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment are managed well
- Manager's monitoring and analysis of withdrawals are much improved.
- Good pre-course activities, such as the development of maritime-contextualised, mathematics and English smartphone apps, for learning at sea, are effective.
- Current learners are making good progress and are producing work of a good standard.
- Systems to record and monitor progress are much improved, and help staff to identify any learners at risk due to slow progress or low marks.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The Marine Society was founded in 1756 to encourage men and boys to join the Royal Navy at the start of the Seven Years War. An Act of Parliament incorporated the society in 1772 to apprentice poor boys to the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy. In 2004 it merged with the Sea Cadet Association to form the Marine Society and Sea Cadets (MSSC).
- The Marine Society College (MSC) operates within the MSSC. It offers personal and professional development to seafarers and provides opportunities for them to gain accredited qualifications and learn work-related skills and prepares them for their future careers within the maritime sector and beyond. All teaching, learning and assessment are delivered through distance learning programmes, predominantly managed by subcontractors. The college offers level 2 and 3 qualifications with a range of IGCSE and A-level programmes, first and Master's degree courses and online learning programmes.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Further develop arrangements to record learners' progress, skills development and achievements effectively, for both qualification-based and non-accredited learning.
- Follow up learners' personal and/or career development to measure the impact of learning by recording the destinations of learners on withdrawal and completion of their courses.
- Develop a protocol to include a record of activities that employers provide. Ensure that arrangements for pastoral and learning support are recorded so that learners' individual needs, for example dyslexia support and other barriers to learning, are identified, understood and shared between all parties to enable appropriate support to be provided.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Well-researched material underpins the charity's vision and strategy. Senior leaders have recently reviewed its strategy to enable plans for an effective progression from youth-based provision to adult learning for seafarers, supporting a wider lifelong learning experience. Appropriate aims and objectives, underpinned by evidence with clear targets to meet objectives, are in place.
- Well-considered actions to improve the quality of the provision since the previous inspection are clear and beginning to be effective. Actions include: the development of systems to monitor learners' progress and achievement; more effective management of subcontracting arrangements for the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment; a greater understanding of MSC's lead role and responsibilities; and improvement in the monitoring and analysis of learners who withdraw. Most of the developments are at an early stage and it is too soon for senior leaders to measure their impact.
- The college's self-assessment report and quality improvement plan offer a good overview of the provision's uniqueness, including the challenges faced by learners at sea. Senior leaders have used the previous inspection findings well to focus their work on improving the quality of its provision and serving its learners better.
- Senior staff offer a wide range of activities to manage support services for learners, including the offer of impartial information, advice and guidance to all seafarers who require it, with over 6,000 contacts made in the previous year. In addition, learners receive an initial meeting that clearly outlines what the college provides, the expectations of the courses on offer, the nature of distance learning and the pastoral support arrangements available to help learners succeed. More formalised arrangements to ensure that learning support is provided and routinely recorded have yet to be developed.
- The focus on English and mathematics is appropriate and the senior leaders have introduced pre-course activities such as the development of maritime-contextualised, non-accredited mathematics and English smartphone apps, for learning at sea.
- Trustees and senior leaders have strong and well-established partnerships with the merchant and Royal Navy and meet the needs of learners and their employers well by providing a range of personal and leisure learning as well as qualifications that can help learners progress from rating to officer roles.
- Professional relationships with the further education and skills sector are few and recently forged. With a relatively new team, knowledge of good practice in managing further education and skills provision in a community learning context is currently insufficient.
- The majority of learners, as employees of the Royal Navy, receive a wide range of information about fundamental British values, the rule of law and democratic processes as part of their naval training. The college supplements this with the clear expectation that learners have an opinion, and are heard. As a result, learners are able to voice their concerns and make adjustments to their courses to suit their needs better.
- Managers consider equality of access to learning and the diverse needs of learners at sea carefully. They make significant efforts to make learning accessible to this isolated group who are learning in very challenging conditions such as in the period prior to combat, during lengthy periods at sea away from family, with excessive engine noise and vibration and in confined personal space.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Trustees have a good understanding of the college's role in educating learners at sea and their responsibilities to support and challenge senior leaders to do this well and improve the quality of provision.
 - Trustees understand the clear and detailed progress reports routinely presented by senior managers, which include data on the performance of learners.
 - The long-standing chair of trustees has extensive knowledge of the context of the college's work and since the previous inspection more forcefully provides both support and challenge to senior managers.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Appropriate policies and procedures relating to young people and vulnerable adults are established. Safe recruitment practices are in place and arrangements to check the suitability of staff, including subcontracted staff, are well established. Key staff receive a wide range of appropriate training and understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
 - The introduction of arrangements to help prevent learners from extremism and radicalisation is recent. Relevant training has provided staff with a good understanding of the government's 'Prevent' agenda and information is shared with learners during induction. Staff understand referral processes.

- Subcontractors have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures as part of their contractual requirements and have, more recently, included the prevention of extremism.
- Designated trustees have responsibility for safeguarding and are suitably vetted and trained. A dedicated safeguarding team oversees any incidents and referrals and takes appropriate action as necessary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- At the time of the inspection there were 36 learners on a range of GCSE, IGCSE and A-level programmes delivered through distance learning by two subcontractors.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not yet consistently good. Managers have made progress since the last inspection but it is too soon to measure the impact of improvements introduced.
- The new pre-course induction and assessment process ensures that managers place learners on the right courses at the appropriate level and currently there have been no early withdrawals, which represents a significant improvement from previous years. The completion of records and the analysis of learner withdrawals help staff to identify actions, but managers do not yet systematically plan for improvement.
- The new development of contextualised English and mathematics smartphone apps to support learners who are returning to education provides a strong foundation to build their further learning and progression in the workplace. Teachers embed English and mathematics in all subject materials where appropriate, and with strong links to maritime themes, for example through the resources provided to accompany a course and the marking of learners' work.
- Teachers and managers set high standards for learners and the good-quality resources provided by the subcontractors support their studies well. The use of alternative resources that are more portable and accessible to suit distance learning while at sea where personal space is limited, moving away from large folders, is underdeveloped.
- Tutors provide most learners with detailed and developmental feedback which identifies key areas for improvements and skills gained. For a minority of learners, feedback on completed assignments is variable. A few tutors do not provide learners with feedback to help them know what they need to do to improve their work. In a small minority of cases, learners receive no recorded feedback at all.
- The college's recording systems lack clarity in identifying and resourcing for additional learning support, such as literacy and numeracy skills development or dyslexia support to meet individual learners' needs. As a result managers are unable to tell whether learners are withdrawing without completing their courses because they needed additional help.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

- Learners take pride in their work, become more confident and aspire to further learning. Learners enjoy their studies and particularly like the support available to overcome logistical difficulties. For example, college staff liaise with qualification-awarding bodies to enable learners to take examinations in remote and challenging locations and circumstances, with high and exacting standards met by all invigilators.
- Learners' standard of work is appropriate to the level of their study. Tutors provide a range of links to additional internet sites, and resources to encourage independence in learning and improve further the standard of learners' work.
- Information, advice and guidance provided by managers on entry to the college are effective and learners have access to a wider body of information and advice within the charity.
- Learners are able to access the extensive range of enrichment activities via opportunities through the Royal Navy, sporting events, fitness groups, other societies and the charity's library service. Learners access local community activities when ashore through social and sporting events both in the UK and abroad.
- Learners sign a learners' agreement with the college which outlines their own role and responsibilities while at the college and what they can expect from MSC. Learners use this agreement to challenge poor provision or support, or be challenged for lack of engagement. As a result, changes to accommodate learners' concerns are made.
- Employers, the college and the subcontractors' tutors each know different information about learners, but this is not routinely shared to ensure that any support requirements are met and barriers to learning are overcome.

- Managers' monitoring of learners' progression into higher education, increased responsibility at work or further career development is ineffective. The routine collection, collation and analysis of destination information to track learners' next steps or measure the impact of learning has yet to be developed. As a result, learners' destinations are not known.
- Despite the previously low proportion of learners who achieved their qualification, current learners are making good progress and enjoy their learning. These learners are producing work of a good standard and are on target to meet or exceed their expected grades.
- Managers use data well to identify the progress and achievements of different groups of learners, and data show no significant trends or inequality in success rates. Managers have only recently introduced the identification of learners from different ethnic groups, and are unable to make a comparison of their success year on year.
- Management systems to record and monitor progress are much improved and enable, through the use of colour coding, an 'at a glance' view of learners' achievements to date. These systems help staff to identify any learners at risk due to either slow progress or low marks, and can help them make appropriate interventions themselves, through email or telephone or through the subcontractors' tutorial systems.

Provider details

Type of provider	Specialist designated institution
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	61
Principal/CEO	Martin Coles
Website address	www.marine-society.org

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)				19		17		
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
Number of learners aged 14–16								
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Extension College ■ Oxford Open Learning 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Rosy Belton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the Director of Lifelong Learning, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They reviewed learning materials, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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