

# The Maltings College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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## **Monitoring visit: main findings**

### **Context and focus of visit**

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

Since the previous monitoring visit one senior manager has left the college.

### **Improvement in outcomes for students**

### **Insufficient progress**

Overall success rates were below average for the year 2014/15 because of poor retention rates, poor outcomes in English and mathematics, and low pass rates on a few vocational courses. Pass rates for those who completed their vocational courses were high for several courses. Value-added data for those who completed the small number of level 3 courses indicate that students made progress broadly in line with expectations.

Students' attendance during the early part of the autumn term this year is below the college target. It is particularly low for the extended diploma in information and communications technology (ICT). Managers have established an appropriate process for following up absence and staff follow this assiduously. Nevertheless, too many students are missing key topics at the beginning of their courses.

Students' attitudes to learning are generally positive. Students are attentive, compliant and usually behave well.

The destinations of students who completed their courses at the end of the 2014/15 academic year are known for most students. Only a very small proportion are not in education, employment or training. Over half are continuing in further education either at The Maltings or at another college. Just over 10% progressed to apprenticeships, and a similar proportion to full-time employment. A few students progressed to higher education.

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

### **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have made significant changes this year. They have appointed a new team of teachers of English and mathematics. Teaching is now based more securely, through initial assessment, on what students know and can do. Teaching in mathematics, particularly, is improving well. In the lessons observed during the inspection, mathematics teaching adapted quickly to the challenges and misconceptions that students present during lessons; consequently, students learn quickly, enjoy their lessons, and make rapid progress. Although English teaching is improving, teachers do not adapt their lessons quickly enough to support students who are struggling to grasp concepts, so learning is more variable. Teachers of English and mathematics often refer to the vocational subjects that students study to help them understand the relevance of their lessons.

Managers have responded well to the need to provide training and professional development for vocational staff. Although vocational teachers understand the need to embed English and mathematics in their teaching, they do not all do enough to ensure that this happens. For example, in many vocational lessons students do not check their own spellings and teachers rarely point out inaccurate spelling and grammar in classwork.

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

### **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have done much work to develop the quality of teaching and learning and this is starting to have an impact in some vocational areas, such as hairdressing and catering, as well as in mathematics and English. Nevertheless, considerable variability remains in the quality of teaching. A comprehensive staff development programme began in the summer term. Continuing professional development (CPD) is well planned and makes good use of expertise from the local academy trust school. Much staff training focuses on the basic elements of good classroom teaching, and a number of staff put this to use. Managers have clarified the college assessment policy, and arrangements are in place to collect and analyse student progress data at five points during the year.

Although many lessons are well planned, others lack a clear focus and learning objectives are not always clear. Students typically engage well with planned activities, but teachers' classroom management does not always ensure that students are kept on task effectively, so the amount they learn varies. Where group activities are planned these are not always managed skilfully enough to ensure that all participate fully. Some tasks are mundane and do not focus enough on the application of knowledge, or encourage deeper thinking to develop understanding. The pace in a few lessons observed was good but it was slower in others, for example, where tasks were not time limited so that learning did not move on quickly enough.

In the mathematics lessons observed, exciting teaching with carefully crafted questions and activities enables students to make rapid progress in their understanding and skills. Teachers and curriculum managers ensure that students on the extended diploma in sport develop skills and attitudes quickly through high quality teaching, presentations by relevant vocational experts, such as physiotherapists, and visits to universities. In hairdressing theory, very good attention is given to developing students' understanding of key terminology. In catering, well-planned practical lessons help students develop good cooking skills. In one lesson observed, students learned to make hollandaise sauce, showing proficiency in the technique on their first attempt in most cases. The teacher had extension activities planned for those who finished quickly, including a mathematics task involving VAT calculations. Peer support was also used well.

Some vocational teachers are now paying more attention to the development of English in vocational studies. For example, in a hairdressing lesson the teacher took care to give a strong emphasis to subject-specific terminology, ensuring that students understood the meaning of the terms, could pronounce them correctly and

used them appropriately in their answers and discussions. In many vocational lessons, however, teachers did not do enough to promote good use of English. Few commented on poor spelling or corrected it in classwork during lessons. Mathematics is not well integrated into most vocational lessons.

In a small number of lessons, classroom management is poor. In these lessons students are not kept on task effectively and do not focus well on their work. For example, in one lesson students spent too much time chatting among themselves so that unfinished written work was submitted at the end of a lesson without challenge from the teacher, even though ample time had been allowed.

Curriculum planning does not always take into account the most appropriate sequence of units. For example, the decision to do the communication and information systems units at the start of the extended diploma in ICT course has resulted in students having no hands-on computing experience and becoming bored.

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

The principal of Trinity Academy continues in the acting executive principal role at The Maltings, spending two days per week on site. His clear and decisive leadership has brought about significant improvements in the way the college is managed. Leadership has been further strengthened this term by the secondment of a full-time assistant principal from the academy on an interim basis as acting principal. Additional support is being provided by the academy's director of human resources, particularly in terms of dealing with specific staffing issues.

Leaders have successfully changed the culture in the college and made clear their high expectations of standards for students and staff. Students in their second year at the college speak positively about changes in ethos and culture since the new management team commenced. For example, one spoke of the tightening up of issues around behaviour, seeing it as a positive move. Staff report an improved sense of teamwork and a better understanding of their accountability.

The college now works with only one subcontractor that delivers the extended diploma in sport. Satisfactory quality assurance arrangements are in place to ensure that delivery to students is of an appropriate standard. Student feedback is positive and arrangements are in place for regular reporting of attendance and progress. Managers have plans in hand to establish a more formal lesson observation procedure.

The new leadership team has introduced wide-ranging quality improvement strategies that are clearly beginning to have an impact. The quality improvement plan (QIP) continues to be implemented and monitored closely. Subject area QIPs are a standing item on vocational area meeting agendas. Senior managers check records of meetings to ensure that appropriate issues are discussed and followed up. As a result of the increased rigour of lesson observations and learning walks, staff training and the recruitment of new staff to the college, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving but there remains significant variation in the quality of lessons. Two teaching posts in motor vehicle maintenance are currently filled on a temporary basis with new appointments planned shortly.

The teachers' performance management system, introduced in the summer term, holds teachers to account for the progress and outcomes of their students, and final review meetings for the last cycle are due to be held shortly. Managers are working with teachers to help them understand performance data better, for example the impact of low retention on success rates.

Governors, including three from the academy, are developing their knowledge and understanding of The Maltings' provision. They are strongly committed to driving improvement and increasingly able to ask challenging questions of the senior leadership team.

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

### **Reasonable progress**

Managers and teachers are improving the support that students need to prepare for future education, training or employment. All students now have a tutorial programme, which is an improvement on the position at the time of the inspection. The planned course is well organised and arranged so that all students, regardless of the level of course they are taking, have the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to become responsible and active citizens. Tutors now set targets in one-to-one tutorials that they record in the students' individual learning plans. Through professional development, tutors are more aware of the need to have high aspirations for their students; some tutors set increasingly specific and measurable targets for students that link well with a recently introduced rewards scheme. This scheme is improving students' behaviour and demeanour around the college.

Almost all students are enrolled on courses that meet their interests and capabilities, and at an appropriate level. Where inspection evidence identified a case where late information about GCSE results had led to a student being placed on an inappropriate level, leaders responded immediately once this was brought to their attention.

The work with the external agency for independent careers advice and guidance is helping to improve the tutorial programme, providing, for example, specific support for students to develop effective personal statements when applying to university. It is too early to judge the efficacy and impact of the support for current students intending to progress into apprenticeships or employment.

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