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Mr Simon Cuthbert
Acting Principal
The Henley College
Deanfield Avenue
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Dear Mr Cuthbert

Short inspection of The Henley College

Following the short inspection on 11 and 12 May 2016, 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 provider was judged to be good in November 2010.

This provider continues to be good.

Your students continue to receive good quality education and training. Governors, managers, teachers and staff have established an effective learning culture which is strongly focused on continuous improvement. The senior leadership team have an accurate understanding of the provision's strengths and areas for improvement. Student performance is closely monitored and actions taken to reduce the impact of the few courses or staff that perform below your expectations are swift and effective.

Governors are assertive and have a particularly clear vision of the college's future direction. They combine to have a particularly useful skill set and actively challenge senior managers well. With your support, they have a particularly insightful and detailed knowledge of the most and least effective aspects of the quality of provision and are strongly committed to improve the quality of that provision even further.

The college provides a pleasant and harmonious learning environment in which students thrive. The vast majority of your students study at level 3 and most achieve their qualifications and progress well on to their next step. Success rates are particularly high for students studying on vocational, foundation and high-needs programmes. Students enrolled on English and mathematics courses at level 2 or below achieve well. For example, GCSE high grades are well above the rate of similar colleges for English and mathematics. A large number of apprentices achieve well above the national rate. Students enjoy college and attendance is high.

Your students continue to benefit from good teaching, learning and assessment. The recent changes you have made to monitoring student progress have ensured a greater and more effective emphasis on raising standards across the whole college, and in particular on the minority of subjects where performance is below your expectations. Senior leaders are currently working towards refining ways to monitor and plan further improvements to teacher performance across a broad range of teaching, learning and assessment measures.

Students have access to a wide range of academic and vocational subjects that are closely aligned to their needs and future aspirations. Governors and leaders are responsive in developing programmes of study that meet the requirements of local and regional employment sectors. Managers and teachers have implemented the 16 to 19 study programmes well. Careers advice and guidance are particularly effective at ensuring that the vast majority of students are best prepared for further study, employment or other training.

Safeguarding is effective.

Since the previous inspection you and your staff have improved the arrangements to safeguard students. Students have a good understanding of how to stay safe and how to recognise and report the potential risks of radicalisation. Support for vulnerable students at risk is good and staff monitor their on-programme progress well. The proportion of vulnerable students progressing to positive destinations is high.

Inspection findings

- The leadership and management have over time steadily improved the number of students achieving their qualifications. Success rates are high and particularly so for the large number of students that study vocational subjects. These students make very good progress based on their attainments prior to starting college. Less-able students achieve well and make at least the progress that is expected of them. However, too many of the most able academic students do not make sufficient progress in the first year of their programme and not enough gain high grades in their second year. Students not meeting the grades they are capable of are required to attend additional group and individual coaching sessions, although these do not always have sufficient impact on improving students' performance. Communication with parents on students' progress is good.
- Managers have correctly identified a small proportion of subjects requiring urgent improvement due to low success rates or where students are not making sufficient progress in relation to their starting point. Improvement strategies are mostly effective and managers correctly identify the strengths and areas for improvement of teachers' classroom practice. Teachers have a much clearer understanding of what is required by managers and support for teachers to improve further is managed well and generally effective. In a few cases, observations of teacher performance in lessons have too much

focus on the activities of the teacher as opposed to the impact of teaching on students' learning. The expectations of teachers to ensure that all students continue to develop further their subject understanding outside of lessons varies too much and requires improvement.

- In 2014/15, senior managers recognised that a minority of curriculum managers were not sufficiently effective at improving students' outcomes. Since then, where students' performance is not good enough, comprehensive actions plans have been introduced and are rigorously monitored by senior and curriculum managers and course teams. Improvements to the standards of teaching and students' performance are clearly evident. A recently introduced quality calendar ensures that all managers have a much clearer understanding of their roles and has led to a more standardised approach across the college. However, as recognised by the leadership, this approach has yet to fully establish an effective way of monitoring and centrally recording the key aspects of an individual teacher's performance, such as the quality of feedback to students or the quality and quantity of learning set outside the classroom.
- The tracking of students' progress is good. Students have a clear understanding of what they have achieved and in many cases what they need to do to improve. Feedback on students' work is generally good. However, at the time of the inspection a minority of teachers continue not to give students sufficient information on how to improve their work, either to help them to get better grades in the future or where they are capable of achieving standards beyond that required by the qualification.
- Students on 16 to 19 study programmes achieve well and develop the skills required to progress on to their next step. The vast majority of students progress on to positive destinations, such as higher education, employment or further training. Careers advice is good and effectively supports the development of students' confidence enabling many to achieve beyond their initial expectations. Employment, personal and social skills are developed well through a wide range of subject and extra-curricular activities.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- students in all subjects make the progress they are capable of and achieve as well as they are able, including the achievement of high grades
- managers, when observing teaching, place even more emphasis on recognising the level of learning taking place by all students; they should also ensure that all aspects of teachers' performance are comprehensively monitored and recorded and that detailed and challenging actions for further improvement are identified
- managers and teachers improve the progress that most able students make and significantly increase the number of students gaining high 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

Richard Beaumont
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors were assisted by the acting assistant principal of curriculum and quality, as nominee. They met with you and your senior managers, and spoke to curriculum managers, teachers and groups of students. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment and reviewed students' written work. They also spoke to students across the campus. They reviewed key college documents, including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding.