

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Jayne Clarke  
Principal  
Oldham Sixth Form College  
Union Street West  
Oldham  
Greater Manchester  
OL8 1XU

Dear Mrs Clarke

### **Short inspection of Oldham Sixth Form College**

Following the short inspection on 27 and 28 September 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 February 2013.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

Since the previous inspection, you and your senior leadership team, managers and governors have maintained a consistently high standard of education for students. Membership of the governing body has changed considerably since the last inspection. Governors are knowledgeable, ambitious, have a wide range of relevant experience and skills and a relentless drive for continuous improvement. Governors challenge you, and your senior leadership team, very effectively to ensure high-quality provision across all areas of the college. The high aspirations of all staff, combined with the culture and ethos of the college, mean that students are inspired and motivated to do their best.

You have implemented the 16 to 19 study programmes very successfully. Students receive beneficial advice and guidance that ensure personalised learning programmes meet their skills and aspirations well. Students who join the college and have yet to achieve grades A\* to C in GCSE English and mathematics are placed on appropriate courses. The majority of students progress to university, with a quarter gaining places at prestigious universities.

Leaders and managers have taken effective action to address successfully the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Equality and diversity monitoring is now rigorous, providing you with a range of data that is carefully and accurately analysed, ensuring that achievement gaps between different groups of students

have narrowed significantly. Leaders and managers have introduced performance management tools in the form of 'recovery plans' to monitor underperforming courses. They now place greater accountability on teachers to ensure that high-quality teaching and learning result in high achievement rates. Leaders and managers are active in identifying and monitoring 'courses in recovery' and, as a result, a small number of teachers have now left the college.

The systematic approach to improving teaching and learning, through learning communities, sharing of good practice across departments and whole-college staff development, helps teachers to improve their teaching practice further. Actions for teachers identified as needing to improve are not always specific enough or focused sufficiently on their teaching practice.

You, your leadership team and managers have worked tirelessly to improve students' development of English and mathematics skills. You recognise that the pace of improvement has been quicker in English but you now have a sharp focus on the development of students' mathematics skills. The current action research project in mathematics has provided significant insight into how you can further improve mathematics in and outside the classroom. Teachers generally use information on students' starting points to plan lessons well. This has resulted in most students successfully achieving or exceeding their target grades.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and action is taken to ensure the safety of staff and students. The highly qualified, experienced and committed safeguarding team investigates diligently all safeguarding concerns. They seek advice and guidance from external agencies to ensure that a high priority is placed on students' welfare and well-being.

The college's safeguarding team works closely with the local authority designated officer (LADO) for safeguarding. The LADO visits the college regularly and talks to students about the importance of personal safety, including threats of radicalisation and extremism, female genital mutilation and forced marriage, as part of the tutorial programme. Leaders and managers also work very closely with external agencies such as the police's 'Prevent' duty coordinator and a leading mental health charity, which ensures students have access to wide-ranging sources of help and support.

All staff, governors and students receive good training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty and are aware of their responsibilities in reporting concerns. Students, staff and governors have a clear understanding of the values of living in Britain which have been successfully aligned to the college's values.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders, managers and governors are committed to the continuous improvement

of the quality of provision across all areas of the college, in the relentless drive to become outstanding. Leaders and managers swiftly and accurately identify underperformance. The 'courses in recovery programme' enables leaders and managers to monitor closely the performance of courses and teachers against specific actions, in order to improve the quality of provision. The success of the programme has resulted in improving achievement rates for students, including the proportion achieving high grades and a reduction in the levels of underperformance. Several courses are still in the recovery programme as their improvements have not been as rapid. Governors rigorously challenge leaders and managers. They analyse forensically students' achievement data, including data for different groups of students, such as children looked after and minority ethnic students, in order to improve students' outcomes. As a result, leaders, managers and governors are able to evaluate accurately the quality of provision.

- Leaders and governors accurately identify improvements needed in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. A highly effective system, including lesson observations, scrutiny of students' work, student progress and feedback from student focus groups, is used to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers know where improvement is required and take swift and decisive action, using a range of strategies to improve performance. Regular and planned staff development, including curriculum area learning communities, sharing of good practice across departments and whole-college staff development, helps teachers to improve further their teaching practice. However, action plans for teachers who are required to improve their teaching do not always focus sharply enough on specific actions to improve their teaching practice.
- Students value the support they receive to develop their English and mathematics skills. The introduction of literacy mentors this term further supports the development of students' English skills. You recognise that previously you focused on English but are now sharply focused on the development of students' mathematics skills. GCSE examination results in English and mathematics at grades A\* to C are higher than similar providers nationally. Almost three quarters of students achieve GCSE grades A\* to C in English.
- Students make good, and often better, progress from their starting points. Most students meet or exceed their target grades. Indicators of risk are in place to identify students who are not making the progress expected of them. A range of effective strategies is in place to support students who are falling behind with their studies. These include weekly subject-specific workshops and reviews with personal tutors. Tracking and monitoring of students' progress works well in individual subject areas, enabling teachers to identify students at risk of falling behind in their studies, their additional learning support needs and any pastoral issues or concerns. This year, leaders have introduced a new system to improve the centralised tracking and monitoring of students' progress. As the system is still in the process of being implemented, its effectiveness in monitoring and recording pastoral support, additional learning support and the impact of cross-curricular working is limited.
- Teachers' feedback on students' written work is clear and detailed and helps students to improve their work.

## **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the new progress monitoring system is fully and consistently implemented, to ensure effective and accurate tracking and monitoring of students' progress, additional learning support and pastoral support
- underperforming courses continue to be identified swiftly and monitored closely, to reduce the number of courses in the recovery programme and further improve the quality of provision and student outcomes
- action plans for teachers who need to improve their teaching focus sharply on specific actions for improvement.

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

Anita Pyrkotsch-Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors, assisted by the director of quality and monitoring, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors met managers, staff, governors, students and looked at students' assessed work. Inspectors reviewed key policies and documents, including those relating to performance, self-assessment, safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. They also considered the views of students.