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19 December 2016

Mr Derek O'Toole
Principal
Hopwood Hall College
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Dear Mr O'Toole

Short inspection of Hopwood Hall College

Following the short inspection on 16 and 17 November 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 May 2011.

This provider continues to be good.

You, your leadership team and governors set high expectations for your learners and staff, with clear priorities to improve the quality of provision, develop the skills of teaching staff, improve the college estate and maintain a strong financial position. Since the previous inspection, you have invested in improving resources to create a better learning environment. Your staff share your ambitious strategy to provide the highest-quality vocational provision which meets local needs and is responsive to national priorities. You and your staff have been successful at resolving most of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education and training in the college since the previous inspection. You and your senior managers have a strong focus on improving provision across all areas through a robust and effective evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Staff development is a key priority to enhance the skills of teachers. Consequently, a large majority of your learners successfully achieve their qualifications and progress to a higher level of study, training or employment.

You have implemented the introduction of 16 to 19 study programmes particularly effectively. Study programmes provide learners aged 16 to 19 with high-quality work-related activities and purposeful work experience which link to their longer-term employment aspirations.

Your self-evaluation process is accurate and is used well by senior managers to secure sustained improvement. You and your senior managers have identified the need to improve the quality of your apprenticeship provision and have taken decisive actions which have successfully brought about improvements. You have introduced effective strategies to improve the provision for English and mathematics, so that the majority of learners are now making good progress from their starting points.

Ensuring high-quality teaching and learning is your highest priority and continues to be a strong focus of the college's work. Leaders and senior managers have significantly enhanced the accountability of managers and staff in pursuit of this key aim, as they work to reach well-founded targets for improvement. You quickly challenge any teacher whose quality of work is below the standard you set; you provide them with effective support and monitor their work to ensure that they improve rapidly. Courses that you and your leadership team identified as performing poorly in 2014/15 have been improved effectively by the strong focus of your senior managers on the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment.

Governors have a good understanding of the college's key priorities and areas for improvement and provide challenge to you and your leadership team. They contribute fully to developing the college's strategic priorities and have a clear view of both local and regional needs.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and managers have implemented robust procedures and training for safeguarding. Staff, governors, employers and learners are confident in dealing with safeguarding matters. The highly trained safeguarding team is meticulous and thorough in recording and monitoring any issues which arise. The team has a comprehensive understanding of all safeguarding referrals, including those relating to potential radicalisation and extremism. Timely and appropriate actions have been taken where concerns have been raised. The tracking and monitoring of all vulnerable learners are effective.

Links with local agencies and local authorities are good. Managers take appropriate and timely action when incidents occur to ensure that staff and learners are protected, including by providing further training and briefings to ensure that staff and learners are informed about how to keep themselves safe.

Learners feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe. Alongside the activities in the tutorial programme, staff and learners arrange a significant number of events to support learners' understanding and recognition of matters relating to safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Activities and events cover current issues, human rights, keeping safe on the internet and the specific training of learners who have the role of safeguarding ambassadors. The college's safeguarding team identifies potential concerns, for example forced marriage, and takes appropriate, preventative action.

Employers are provided with information on safeguarding at the start of an

apprentice's training programme to ensure that they understand their responsibility for the safety and well-being of their apprentices.

Inspection findings

- Senior managers ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is central to the college's focus. Since the previous inspection, an improved system has been put in place for the observation of teaching and learning, with more effective ways to monitor learners' progress and identify the impact of teaching on learning. This new practice has resulted in more effective identification of poorly performing teachers, who are supported well to improve. Consequently, achievement rates for learners in the majority of subject areas have improved and are above national rates.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that the curriculum has continued to develop to meet the needs of learners, employers and the local community. They work effectively with local businesses and other partners to ensure that the curriculum is current, supports learners' employability prospects and provides opportunities for learners to progress to higher-level technical skills programmes. The college staff includes industry specialists who enrich the teaching of the vocational curriculum. Learners benefit from the college's significant investment in industry-standard equipment and facilities.
- Leaders and senior managers have re-focused the college's community learning provision. They have established good links with community groups to engage with learners who have not participated in education and training for some time. These learners benefit from the development of their essential English and mathematical skills, including English for speakers of other languages; they are progressing to further study and/or employment.
- Leaders and senior managers have established programmes within schools to encourage learners to progress into further education or training when they leave school. This work has contributed to reducing the number of young people not actively involved in education or training in the region.
- The majority of learners on study programmes achieve their qualifications and progress well from their previous attainment. The majority of adult learners make good progress and successfully achieve their qualifications. Not enough apprentices successfully complete their programmes and in the planned time.
- The proportion of learners aged 16 to 19 on study programmes who achieve high grades in GCSE English and mathematics is too low. A high proportion of adult learners on GCSE English and mathematics courses achieve high grades. Learners on functional skills courses in these subjects make good progress and achieve well. Senior managers have recently introduced a new strategy to improve the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics to help learners and apprentices develop their skills and make rapid progress. In GCSE English and mathematics, teachers now challenge the majority of learners to make more progress and improve their grades. Consequently, the majority of current learners on programmes are making good progress. However, teachers do not consistently challenge the most able learners on study programmes to

achieve higher grades in GCSE mathematics.

- Senior managers have been successful at developing the skills of vocational tutors to integrate English and mathematics into vocational areas of work. Consequently, tutors are more confident in helping to reinforce English and mathematics in vocational lessons. Learners' understanding of the application of English and mathematics within their vocational work is good.
- Teachers have high aspirations for their learners and use a variety of challenging and interesting activities to motivate them. Consequently, learners enjoy college and make good progress towards achieving ambitious targets. Teachers monitor accurately the progress their learners make and provide effective support so that learners know what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers use questioning well to check learners' understanding; however, they do not consistently challenge learners' responses to help them develop their learning further and make more rapid progress.
- Learners on study programmes benefit from a good range of high-quality work-related activities and work experience. A high proportion of learners take part in work-related activities within the college, such as working in its restaurant, bistro, café and hair and beauty salon. External work experience is planned well, with purposeful objectives which support learners to improve their employability skills.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge and commercial experience well to help learners recognise the skills that employers value and understand what it is like to work in specific industries. For example, learners on hairdressing courses complete tasks to timings that reflect the standards of the industry. They are taught to understand the commercial pressures in a busy hairdressing salon.
- A wide range of enrichment activities helps learners to develop their personal, social and work skills. Teachers encourage learners to participate in college-based, regional and national competitions to develop their learners' communication, team-building and problem-solving skills.
- College careers advisers provide effective careers guidance to learners both before and during their learning programmes; learners are clear about their next steps in achieving their employment objectives. Learners have good attitudes to learning and work; they arrive on time to lessons equipped to learn. Learners behave well and are respectful to each other and teachers.
- Senior managers have re-structured the apprenticeship programme, which represents around 4% of the college's provision. Robust systems are in place to monitor apprentices' progress. Data on apprentices' progress is used effectively to inform reviews of assessors' performance. Tutors set clear targets for apprentices, which helps them to make rapid progress. Tutors' feedback to apprentices is effective at helping apprentices to understand how they can improve. Consequently, apprentices are making good and timely progress towards achieving their qualifications. Apprentices develop good vocational skills that are valued by their employers.
- Senior managers have introduced a clear strategy to improve learners' attendance. Student support tutors respond quickly when learners fail to arrive at college, and contact them to identify the reasons for non-attendance. These

tutors work with learners to help them improve their attendance, and where appropriate work with parents on this priority. Attendance on vocational courses is good; however, the attendance of learners aged 16 to 19 on GCSE English and mathematics courses is too low.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the number of apprentices who achieve their qualifications and in the planned time increases
- learners aged 16 to 19 studying GCSE English and mathematics make good progress and a greater proportion achieve grades A* to C
- GCSE mathematics teachers provide more challenging learning activities for the most able learners
- learners' attendance at English and mathematics lessons improves.

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

Stephen Miller
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the short inspection, the team was assisted by the assistant principal as nominee. We held meetings with you, your senior leaders, the chair of the governing body, managers, teaching staff, employers, partners and learners. We visited your two sites with members of your staff to observe teaching, learning and assessment and to look at learners' work. We spoke with learners at both sites. We reviewed key documents, including those relating to the college's strategy, self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of learners by reviewing the comments received on Ofsted's online questionnaires, from your own learners' survey and by seeking the views of learners during on-site inspection activity.