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13 July 2017

Mr Len Conway  
Principal  
The Building Crafts College  
Kennard Road  
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Dear Mr Conway

### **Short inspection of The Building Crafts College**

Following the short inspection on 13 and 14 June 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the college was judged to be good in February 2014.

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

Your learners continue to receive good-quality education and training. Many achieve well, and their progression to higher-level courses, employment and apprenticeships is good. The standard of learners' work is particularly high and learners develop good skills in their vocational subjects and in their personal and social skills, to help them into employment.

Leaders' and managers' very strong, and successful, focus on preparing learners for employment and on 'building careers' continues. Learners and employers comment very positively on the quality of education and training the college provides. Since the previous inspection, you have continued to expand the range of courses to meet the needs of both learners and employers, and apprenticeship provision, for example, has grown markedly. Managers have also successfully introduced construction courses for school pupils aged 14 to 16 to help re-engage them in education and training, and have developed programmes in conservation, including at undergraduate level.

Learners very much enjoy their studies and feel safe in college and in their workplaces. In the college's surveys of their opinions, learners comment positively on the support they receive from college staff to help them succeed. Their behaviour and attitudes to work are very good. Learners' attendance and punctuality are good and their retention on courses is high.

Leaders and managers have effective plans to improve, focusing clearly on all of the areas for improvement noted at the previous inspection. They have paid successful attention to maintaining good standards of teaching, learning, assessment and training, although too little is yet outstanding. Teaching and learning are not yet good for GCSE English and mathematics.

Achievement by the large number of adult learners is high and improving. It is not as good for the significantly smaller number of learners aged 16 to 18 on study programmes, largely because of poor performance on one level 1 general construction course, but it improved to around national rates in 2015/16.

A high proportion of apprentices achieve their full framework qualification, with the majority doing so in the planned time. Learners' achievements in functional skills English and mathematics qualifications have been good since the previous inspection, but for the first small cohort of learners taking GCSE English and mathematics in 2015/16 none achieved a grade C and above.

Teachers plan and deliver their lessons well. Learners and apprentices make good progress, are interested, are ready to learn, and exhibit good workplace knowledge. Their behaviour is good and they respect their peers and college staff. Particularly positive is the way that all ages of learners work well together, with younger learners gaining significantly from their close proximity to adult learners, many of whom have very rich work and career experiences.

Practical training is particularly good, with teachers and learners setting very high standards. Learners happily rework or redo practical tasks with which they are not satisfied. The standard of practical work and written evidence in portfolios is high. Many bench joinery apprentices already produce work to cabinet maker standards, and stonemasons often work on very complex tasks, working on long-term projects, such as at Canterbury Cathedral or on National Trust properties, as at Gunnersbury House.

Many learners and apprentices work on extra practical tasks, at standards well beyond those required by their courses, to further develop their underpinning skills and aid progression. For example, one learner is making a complex adjustable lectern for her brother and another is making a rocking chair for a showcase event.

Many learners and apprentices come to the college with good skills in English and mathematics. For the relatively small number of learners on study programmes, however, the development of these skills in discrete lessons for GCSE English and mathematics requires improvement. Teaching, learning and assessment are not effectively contextualised or matched to learners' needs. Teachers' checks on learning and feedback to learners do not effectively consolidate and extend learning or enable learners to make good progress.

In many lessons, vocational teachers soundly develop learners' and apprentices' vocationally related mathematics skills, and learners' communication skills are

improved. However, their English skills are insufficiently enhanced through teachers' correction of their spelling and grammar errors in written work and not all learners take sufficient notes during lessons.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and managers have ensured that safeguarding arrangements continue to be effective, for both learners and apprentices. Since the previous inspection, governors and managers have kept pace with the various changes to safeguarding, including requirements of the 'Prevent' duty. They successfully promote a college culture which emphasises the inclusive responsibility of all staff to keep learners safe, and where staff are aware of their learners' and apprentices' concerns. Particular attention is paid to matching safeguarding to the increasingly complex range of age groups in the college's provision, from the age of 14 to well past usual retirement age.

Of particular note are the enhanced external partnerships furthering the quality of the college's safeguarding. For example, those with the London Borough of Newham and with the Metropolitan Police positively impact upon training, sharing of expertise and in dealing with specific safeguarding and 'Prevent' issues.

Obligations under the 'Prevent' duty are appropriately met. You have ensured that staff and learners have been introduced to key aspects that they need to know about, including the risks of extremism and radicalisation. Learners' and apprentices' understanding and knowledge are checked and supported in their monitoring and review meetings with teachers. As a priority for continuing your work and improvements during 2017, you identify the need to further consolidate learners' understanding of British values and 'Prevent'.

### **Inspection findings**

- Governors, leaders and managers have continued to ensure that the quality of provision for learners and apprentices is good while working well to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Learners and apprentices enjoy their learning. They often come to the college because of its high reputation within the building crafts industry, successfully promoting high standards and good preparation for employment. Many progress to more demanding courses, apprenticeships and employment.
- Leaders and managers have continued to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, promoting high standards of work and the good progress most learners make on their courses. They are well aware that aspects of teaching and learning require further improvement, including for English and mathematics.
- Leaders' and managers' work with employers is highly successful in furthering the college's mission and themes to provide high-quality and responsive training for

work in the building crafts industry, and to maximise the contribution of the college to its local communities.

- Through excellent partnerships with the building crafts industry, leaders and managers make sure that learners and apprentices benefit from successful work and employment-related opportunities.
- Leaders, managers and governors understand which aspects of the college's work require improvement, but they have not yet managed to make the significant move from largely good teaching and learning to much that is outstanding.
- The college's scheme for the observation of teaching and learning is not promoting sufficient improvement. Good developments are in hand to work with a nearby, large, general further education college to strengthen the external review of quality and peer appraisal.
- While learners' achievement of functional skills in English and mathematics has been high since the previous inspection, their achievement of grade C and above in GCSE mathematics and English requires improvement.

### **Next steps for the provider**

In pursuit of their aim to become an outstanding provider, governors, leaders and managers should ensure that:

- teaching and learning are largely outstanding, paying particular attention to improving the teaching and learning for GCSE English and mathematics
- the college's observation scheme for teaching and learning focuses more on the extent of learning and leads to clearly identified plans for staff development and improvement
- learners' achievement is consistently high, paying particular attention to improving learners' high grades, of C and above, for GCSE mathematics and English.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Martin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors were assisted by the quality manager, as nominee. We met with you and your management team, teachers, learners, apprentices and governors. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment, and reviewed

learners' and apprentices' work. We reviewed key policies and documents, including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We also considered the views of learners and employers.