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Ms Lesley Davies
Principal
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Dear Ms Davies

Short inspection of Trafford College

Following the short inspection on 19 and 20 September 2017, 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 January 2015.

This provider continues to be good.

You have ensured that students continue to receive a good-quality education. You provide very good support, which is valued by your students.

You, the governors and staff provide a welcoming and safe environment. Students reflect a culture of professionalism and respect in and outside lessons. Student behaviour is very good. Attendance to lessons during the inspection was high and students arrived on time and were ready to work.

You and your leadership team have improved most areas identified at the previous inspection. You, your governors and your leadership team systematically and rigorously check how successfully improvements happen. Experienced governors scrutinise performance. They challenge senior leaders when they do not make improvements quickly enough. You now need to make sure that current actions ensure that students achieve their potential and develop their English and mathematics skills.

You and your leadership team support lecturers to improve their teaching skills. New initiatives provide effective opportunities for staff to share good practice. For example, A-level lecturers provide support to vocational staff who teach on courses that now include students completing an examination. As a result, lecturers now

prepare students better for revision and examination techniques and student achievements have improved.

You and your staff have maintained a good standard of teaching, learning and assessment. Most subject areas judged as requiring improvement at the previous inspection have improved. These include business management, health and social care, early years and A-level mathematics and chemistry. Achievement for most students and apprentices is above national rates. It is high for adult students. However, in a small minority of subjects, achievement remains low.

You and your staff have increased the proportion of students who achieve higher grades in 2016/17. Most students make good progress in lessons. They receive helpful guidance from lecturers to improve. For example, lecturers give helpful feedback to engineering students; this means that they produce practical work to industry standards. Most lecturers set and review students' target grades. Students talk confidently about their personal targets and their progress towards achieving them. You and your leadership team have identified a minority of current vocational and A-level subjects in which students do not achieve the grade of which they are capable. You have implemented actions to rectify this but it is too early to see how successful these are.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in English and mathematics continues to require improvement. You have invested in English and mathematics coaches to support vocational lecturers to embed English and mathematics in their subjects. Despite these interventions, lecturers do not routinely develop students' English and mathematics skills in vocational lessons.

You have implemented successfully study programmes for students aged 16 to 19. Managers and staff now provide students with a range of work-related activities. Most students attend purposeful work experience.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have maintained effective safeguarding arrangements since the previous inspection. You have updated your policies and practice in respect of the 'Prevent' duty and in response to the recent Manchester Arena terrorist attack. Staff ensure that students understand the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. Students feel safe and they know how to report any concerns. You and your staff continue to prioritise safeguarding.

Managers carry out suitable recruitment checks and keep accurate records. Staff and governors receive regular training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Managers have tailored the training to the context of the college. Staff respond swiftly and effectively to safeguarding incidents. They work with a wide range of external agencies and the college's subcontractors to ensure that they resolve safeguarding concerns successfully.

Inspection findings

- The senior leadership team, governors and managers know the college very well. They correctly identify weaker areas of performance through self-evaluation and quality-improvement arrangements. They take swift and appropriate action to tackle these areas for development, which in most instances brings about improvement. In 2015/16 leaders responded swiftly to low A-level achievements on subcontracted provision. As a result, students' achievements have improved in A-level subcontracted provision and they make better progress from their starting points. However, improvements are too slow in GCSE English and mathematics and in a minority of A-level and vocational subjects.
- Senior leaders maintain a good standard of teaching, learning and assessment. They accurately assess the lecturers' ability to teach. They provide effective support and challenge where necessary. Leaders ensure that staff are up to date with industry practice. Lecturers and assessors take part in effective staff development. They have good links with employers. As a result, students develop the knowledge and the practical skills that they need for further study or employment. A high proportion of students who complete their course progress into employment, education or apprenticeships.
- In the majority of lessons, teaching, learning and assessment is good. Most students make progress and they develop new skills. However, lecturers do not routinely plan learning that takes into account students' starting points. In these lessons, the most able do work that is too easy and the least able struggle to keep up.
- Leaders and managers have increased the proportion of students on study programmes who make good or better progress from their starting points. In most A-level and level 3 subjects, students achieve at or above their target grades. However, on a few courses students' progress is too slow. These include level 3 sport and art and design, A-level English literature and biology, AS-level history and biology and Altrincham FC level 2 students.
- In 2016/17 leaders and managers have successfully increased the proportion of students aged 16 to 19 who achieve functional skills English and mathematics. They have also increased the proportion who make progress between GCSE levels in English and mathematics. However, the number of students aged 16 to 18 who achieve grade A* to C and grade 4 to 9 in GCSE English and mathematics requires improvement.
- Lecturers in most English and mathematics lessons develop stimulating activities that engage students. In GCSE English, students worked well together to write an article, using an image of a forest as stimulus. However, in a minority of English and mathematics lessons lecturers are not clear about what they want students to do. Consequently, these students make insufficient progress.
- Leaders and managers have improved the management of apprenticeships since the previous inspection. Leaders and managers have improved their working relationships with employers. They are more selective about which employers they work with. Consequently, apprentices make better progress because

employers work successfully with college managers to plan and deliver learning that meets the needs of employers and apprentices.

- Leaders and managers have sustained the achievement rates of apprentices, which remain above national rates. They have effectively prepared for the introduction of new standards in apprenticeships. Apprentices who are on the new standards are making good progress.
- Well-qualified and experienced lecturers and assessors engage, support and motivate apprentices to develop and improve their skills. For example, management apprentices use their skills to reorganise teams. They focus on team members' strengths in allocating tasks and job roles.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders and managers bring about sustained improvement in underperforming courses
- lecturers use students' starting points to plan learning so that all students make the progress of which they are capable
- teaching and learning, particularly for the most able, challenges students to make good or better progress and achieve the high grades of which they are capable
- the proportion of students who achieve a grade A* to C and grade 4 to 9 in GCSE English and mathematics is increased
- lecturers develop students' English and mathematics skills in vocational lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

Alison Cameron Brandwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we were assisted by the vice-principal curriculum as nominee. We met with you, your senior leaders, governors, managers, lecturers, employers and students. We observed sessions at two college sites and in the workplace. We reviewed students' assessed work and their progress on electronic tracking systems. We spoke with students, staff, employers and a subcontractor. We obtained student views through face-to-face interviews and an online survey. We reviewed key documents, including those relating to the college's strategy, self-assessment and performance and safeguarding.