

The Marine Society College of the Sea

Community learning and skills provider

Inspection dates

28–29 September 2017

Overall effectiveness		Good	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Adult learning programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have a very clear and well-considered strategy to support seafarers to improve their education and to progress in their careers.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders, managers and staff have taken successful and effective actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the outcomes for learners.
- Staff monitor the progress of learners very well. As a result, the majority of learners are on track to achieve their GCSEs and A levels in mathematics, English and science.
- Staff understand very well the complexities of learning and working at sea and give good advice to learners to help them choose suitable courses. As a result, the number of learners who remain on their programme has improved and is high.
- Learners have high aspirations, enjoy their learning and take pride in their work. They produce work of a good standard.
- Staff assess well the support that learners need to be successful, and provide a good range of resources to help them overcome the barriers to learning at sea.
- The vast majority of learners who achieve their qualification remain in employment, secure promotion and/or take up further learning.
- Managers have designed and implemented the curriculum very well. Learners have access to a variety of courses that develop the skills they need to become officers in the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy.
- Managers do not know how many of the potential learners on the pre-courses, 'maths@sea' and 'English@sea', progress to higher levels of learning. As a result, they do not understand whether the courses support learners well to move on to a higher level of qualification.
- A small minority of learners have not yet completed the online 'Prevent' duty course, or fully understand its relevance to their lives.
- Staff do not regularly follow up the recommendations given to a minority of tutors at the subcontractor, on how to improve feedback on learners' work. As a result, they do not know whether the actions have been implemented.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The Marine Society was founded in 1756 to encourage men and boys to join the Royal Navy at the start of the Seven Years War. An Act of Parliament incorporated the society in 1772 to apprentice poor boys to the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy. In 2004, it merged with the Sea Cadet Association to form the Marine Society and Sea Cadets (MSSC).
- The Marine Society College (MSC) operates within the MSSC. It offers personal and professional development to seafarers and provides opportunities for them to gain accredited qualifications, and to develop the skills required to support them to progress their careers. The college offers a range of courses, from bespoke maritime mathematics and English, through to GCSEs, A levels, degrees, scholarships, and short online courses. Teaching, learning and assessment are delivered through distance learning programmes, managed by one subcontractor. This inspection was of GCSEs, A levels and short online courses.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the arrangements to record learners' progression and destinations to include those seafarers completing the pre-courses in 'maths@sea' and 'English@sea', and use this information to evaluate how effectively these courses support learners to move on to higher levels of qualification and learning.
- Ensure that all learners complete the necessary 'Prevent' duty training. Staff should support learners to understand the relevance and reasons for completing courses and how this relates to their work and everyday lives.
- Ensure that managers follow up the recommendations given to tutors at the subcontractor, after they sample learners' work and in order to confirm that actions for improvement have been implemented.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have a very clear strategy and vision for the college to give seafarers the best possible lifelong learning opportunities tailored to meet their individual needs. They communicate their aims and objectives well throughout the college and all staff work hard to meet the needs of learners.
- Managers have taken incisive actions to improve the quality of programmes since the previous inspection. These include the recording and monitoring of learners' progress, and improving the proportion of learners who complete and achieve their qualifications.
- Managers' strategy to develop learners' mathematical and English skills is effective. Managers have successfully implemented pre-course activities, through an award-winning online distance learning application in maritime-related mathematics and English. The number of adults who access these resources is high. Learners completing GCSEs use the applications to support their learning.
- Staff manage the subcontractor well. They make effective use of regular performance meetings to share good practice and discuss learners' progress. MSC staff sample learners' work and give regular feedback to tutors at the subcontractor. However, managers do not follow up on the outcomes of this feedback sufficiently and do not know whether all their recommendations have been implemented.
- Managers have carefully planned and implemented the curriculum offer. They work well with partners, such as the Royal Navy and its subcontractor, to ensure that programmes and qualifications meet the needs of adults at sea very well. As a result, there are appropriate progression routes for seafarers. Courses and qualifications are relevant and support learners well to prepare and progress from rating to officer roles.
- Managers' evaluation of programmes and the quality improvement plan give a good overview of the college's uniqueness and identify well the areas for improvement. Managers review regularly the progress made and its impact on learners. Managers clearly communicate their priorities to staff, who respond positively and work together to make improvements to the learners' experience.
- Learners receive a wide range of information about British values, including the rule of law, respect for others and freedom of speech. Staff encourage learners through surveys to voice their opinions and, as a result, have taken actions to make changes to learners' programmes and access to resources.
- Managers carefully consider the diverse needs of learners at sea and take effective action to make learning accessible to this often isolated group. Staff make effective adjustments to ensure that all learners, even those in remote and challenging conditions, can take examinations.

The governance of the provider

- Trustees have substantial knowledge, experience and understanding of the maritime industry and the college's role in education. They use this very well to support and challenge the senior management team regularly to ensure that it delivers a good-quality

service to its learners.

- Trustees understand well the regular, clear and detailed reports they receive on the performance of the college and the progress of learners. They use this information to evaluate the effectiveness of the college, and to agree additional resources, such as staff, to ensure that the college continues to meet the needs of seafarers.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers have ensured that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to cover all aspects of safe practice. The safeguarding team is appropriately trained, has extensive knowledge and has developed effective partnerships with referral agencies and the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy safeguarding teams.
- Managers have implemented the 'Prevent' duty well. Staff, including those at the subcontractor, have received appropriate training on how to protect learners from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. The majority of learners have a clear understanding of the potential risks. However, a minority have not completed the online training module available to them, or fully understand how the content relates to their lives and work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- At the time of the inspection, there were 53 learners on a range of GCSE, IGCSE and A-level programmes, delivered through distance learning by one subcontractor. There were also around 200 seafarers accessing the online 'maths@sea' and 'English@sea' pre-course activities to improve their skills in preparation to apply for an accredited programme.
- Staff ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are effective in helping learners to achieve and make good progress. They use their knowledge and experience of seafaring very well and provide a good range of high-quality learning opportunities which relate to learners' job roles and high aspirations.
- Staff successfully put learners on the correct course and at the appropriate level. Pre-course information is clear and induction and assessment are thorough. As a result, learners have a very good understanding of what is expected of them and the commitment required to prepare for their examinations.
- Tutors and staff set very high standards for learners and the good-quality workbooks and resources available support their learning well. Learners have access to a range of additional resources, including those online in education and science, and access to the Marine Society Library. The MSC website for learners has good resources to help them develop effective revision techniques.
- The large majority of learners receive timely and helpful feedback on their work and assignments. Tutors give detailed feedback that includes the correction of spelling and grammar and identifies key areas for improvement. Tutors direct learners who need extra support to helpful suggested model answers.
- Staff support learners who have additional learning needs very well. Staff identify learners' needs, such as dyslexia, quickly, and put appropriate support in place. Learners

access effective peer support through a mentoring programme.

- Learners develop their English skills well. Those taking GCSEs use the high-quality maritime-related applications to support their development. Through the 'writing@sea' application, learners improve their written work to a good standard. Tutors use well-designed resources to support learners to understand how mathematics relates to their job role and the maritime industry. Through the workbooks and exercises, learners successfully show the skills they have developed, and are well prepared to take their examinations.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners have high aspirations for their future as seafarers and also for when they leave the Navy. The majority of learners have been away from education for a long period of time and are enthusiastic about studying again. Learners are self-confident, take pride in their work and develop the independent learning skills required to complete a distance learning programme.
- Staff and tutors support learners very well to overcome the barriers they face, such as high noise levels and working in confined spaces, when learning at sea. Learners really value the support they receive from the college and the Royal Navy which enables them to continue their learning and to take their examinations when they are in remote and challenging locations.
- Learners receive detailed and effective pre-course advice and guidance. College staff understand very well the complexities of life at sea and give learners comprehensive information about the options open to them, and the nature of distance learning and available support. Learners benefit throughout their course from the ongoing advice available within the Marine Society, and are clear on their next steps.
- Managers have developed a very good tracking and monitoring system which brings together all the information held on learners' progress, assessments and achievements. Staff use this well to ensure that learners submit assignments on time and learners are regularly rewarded for ongoing achievements. As a result, learners are very clear about the progress they have made, their achievements to date and what they have left to complete in order to finish their programme.
- Staff give learners helpful and well-thought-out advice to support their well-being. Staff send out an informative weekly newsletter with relevant hints and tips, for example on sleeping effectively, healthy eating and raising their awareness of the mental health support available through a partner charity. Learners have access to and use the free additional courses available to support a healthy lifestyle, such as in yoga.
- Learners feel safe and know what to do if they have any concerns about their own safety or that of others. The majority of learners are aware of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. They receive useful information at induction and through the learners' agreement. Managers have recently introduced an online course for learners to complete. However, a minority of learners have not accessed the course and do not understand fully why they need to complete it.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the number of learners who start, stay on their programme and achieve their qualification has increased and is good. Learners enjoy their learning and produce work of a good standard.
- Current learners make good progress. MSC staff and tutors use the comprehensive tracking system well to identify learners at risk of falling behind. They take action quickly to support learners to get back on track through extra emails, telephone calls or through the subcontractor's tutorial systems. As a result, the majority of learners are on track to meet or exceed their expected grades.
- The tracking of learners' destinations is good. The vast majority of learners who achieve their qualification remain in employment, secure promotion and/or take up further learning opportunities. Managers understand well the reasons why a small minority of learners do not continue with their accredited qualifications. However, managers do not know how many of the seafarers on the 'maths@sea' and 'English@sea' short courses move on to higher levels of learning, or what impact these courses have had in developing their skills.
- Managers use data well to identify and track closely the participation and success of different groups of learners. Managers have taken effective actions to increase the number of females participating in learning, in a predominately male environment. There are no significant variations in the performance of groups of learners.
- A high proportion of learners who take and pass their GCSEs and A levels achieve grades A* to C.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130414
Type of provider	Community learning and skills
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	45
Principal/CEO	Martin Coles
Telephone number	0207 654 7000
Website	www.marine-society.org

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	–	–	–	26	–	27	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	–	–	–	–	–	–		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	–		–		–			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	0							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors	Oxford Open Learning							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They reviewed learning workbooks, assessments and online resources. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Jane Hughes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tricia Collis

Ofsted Inspector

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