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Mr Zahid Bhatti
EMBS
Second Floor
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Dear Mr Bhatti

Short inspection of EMBS Community College Limited

Following the short inspection on 4–5 October 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 your provision was judged to be good in December 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection, you and your team have continued to provide good-quality study programmes for the 16- to 19-year-olds in your sixth form. You have successfully increased the range of activities within the study programmes. You continue to provide good opportunities to raise aspirations and improve the life chances for some of the most deprived young people in the Oxford area.

Staff fully appreciate and understand the needs of learners. They work with learners effectively to develop their confidence, capability and career prospects. You and your team have dealt with the small number of areas for development identified at the previous inspection and consolidated many into strengths. Good communication and effective monitoring of learner performance provides you with a thorough understanding of the progress all learners make. Current learners, many of whom have not enjoyed or performed well at school, make good progress.

Your staff know the learners well and work hard to support them by providing a relaxed and caring environment. Learners feel able to ask for help and support with their academic work or their personal lives. Your staff understand that supporting learners to achieve helps to develop their confidence and allows them to raise their personal aspirations, improve their life chances and career expectations.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding continues to be effective, with appropriate actions taken to safeguard learners. Learners feel safe and well looked after.

All staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Learners are very aware of the dangers and influences of others with radicalised or extremist views. They trust their tutors sufficiently to share their concerns with them. The designated safeguarding officer is accessible and well known to all learners. Records of learners deemed to be 'at risk' for safeguarding matters are adequate and these are securely stored. However, not all interventions are fully recorded on learners' files, for example, attempts to make follow-up telephone calls to parents or carers.

Learners understand that bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour are not acceptable or tolerated in college or elsewhere. At induction, learners receive a purposeful briefing about staying safe when using the internet. However, this information is not further reinforced to remind all computer users of how to stay safe, especially those who use the college computers, which are accessible to all students.

Staff manage health and safety very well in the two centres. Tutors promote safe working practices, health and well-being as a priority. This helps learners to understand how these safeguards should be part of their everyday working activities. However, staff completing workplace risk assessments do not put sufficient emphasis on, or comment sufficiently about, the potential risks from extremism or radicalisation.

Inspection findings

- Overall achievement rates remain high. Although these rates dropped slightly in 2014/15 they recovered in 2015/16 and continued to rise in 2016/17. Almost all learners are successful in improving their confidence and gaining academic qualifications.
- Tutors have benefited from an extensive programme of internal and external professional development. The training has helped them improve their teaching and provide the most appropriate support for learners. Several tutors commented on the benefits of the skills they learned from the 'giving feedback' training. All tutors have an appropriate teaching qualification with several now taking post-graduate qualifications.
- The newly appointed teaching and learning coordinator has already helped staff deliver imaginative and thoughtfully planned sessions that are highly motivational to learners. Purposeful observations of teaching and learning, combined with regular support, have further built staff confidence and skills. Teachers are able to be more innovative in their teaching and to provide a wider range of activities during sessions that meet the needs of all learners.
- You have divided the academic year into six, six-week terms to break up courses into manageable periods for learners. As a result, they remain highly motivated, eager and enthusiastic to learn.
- Learner attendance is good. The decision to run all classes in the afternoons supports learning well. Many learners arrive early to eat lunch and chat to tutors,

and this ensures that sessions start on time.

- Classes are small and learners are allocated to tutors who best understand their individual needs. Learners quickly grow in confidence as they learn new skills, for example understanding the importance of working with others as they make new contacts in college. Tutors skilfully plan an appropriate range of learning tasks and activities. Most are skilled at asking questions to check and challenge learners' understanding and to extend their learning.
- Learner induction to the college is well planned and executed. Parents and carers are fully involved in induction. They meet staff and understand how they can play a role in supporting and encouraging the young person in training. Learners agree targets with staff but do not routinely receive a copy of these targets or any written reinforcement of what they have agreed.
- Learners receive useful careers advice from the early stages and throughout the rest of their course. This helps them consider how the training and work placement they attend can help with their career aims. Staff are very well qualified and can explain the potential options and career pathways through college, work, or into an apprenticeship.
- The pastoral and welfare team are easily accessible to all learners who readily turn to them for help to manage any problems they are facing. The staff team have good links with local social services and access to a wide range of other support agencies. This allows them to provide the right support for learners where appropriate.
- Staff have worked hard to develop new partnerships with local charities and employers to provide a wider range of work placements. These partners understand your learners' needs and are enthusiastic about providing them with structured and supported work placements that introduce the learners into work. Your staff understand that many of your learners need very short duration work placements in an environment where they are encouraged and supported.
- Staff work well with partners to provide an extensive range of enrichment activities for learners including trips, guest speakers, social and community work, and the Duke of Edinburgh bronze award. Learners also very much appreciate taking part in dance, arts, music and sports workshops. New courses introduced this year in business, social and community work, and computing at level 3, provide popular additions to the existing programmes
- Your self-assessment report is clear and concise and identifies the progress the college has made over the past two years. You know what you need to do to improve the provision further and have suitably clear and focused goals to achieve these things.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should make sure that:

- managers and tutors maintain and further improve the high levels of learner achievement for study programmes to improve the life chances and career

aspirations of all learners

- learners are reminded of the importance of the safe use of the internet, especially when using publicly accessible computers
- records of support provided to learners are sufficiently detailed to provide a comprehensive picture of all the interventions taken by EMBS staff
- staff delivering the induction to new learners should routinely provide learners with copies of the targets for learning agreed during induction
- staff conducting risk assessments for potential work placements give due consideration to, and comment on, the potential risks of radicalisation and extremism.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors, and one Ofsted inspector visited EMBS Community College sixth-form provision for two days. The principal, as nominee, assisted inspectors. Inspectors met with the principal, managers, programme leaders, tutors, welfare staff and partners, and spoke to a range of current and previous learners. Inspectors visited the centres in Oxford and Banbury. Inspectors observed teaching and learning, and reviewed learners' written work. They also reviewed key documentation including the self-assessment report, safeguarding and performance management documentation, and the information and communications policies.