

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mr Luke Rake  
Principal  
Kingston Maurward College  
Kingston Maurward  
Dorchester  
Dorset  
DT2 8PY

Dear Mr Luke Rake

### **Short inspection of Kingston Maurward College**

Following the short inspection on 10 and 11 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 the provider was judged to be good in October 2014.

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

Since your arrival in August 2016, you and your senior management team have developed a nurturing, respectful and collaborative culture that encourages learners and staff to work well together. Kingston Maurward College's main business remains the provision of land-based vocational education and training, including related apprenticeships. You have successfully increased the number of full-time students aged between 16 and 18 at a time when this age group is declining locally. The college staff work hard to continue to provide good-quality learning and an overall positive experience for all of your learners.

You and your management team have made good progress in most of the areas for development highlighted at the previous inspection in October 2014. Leaders and managers continue to develop an ethos of high expectations for both staff and learners. This led to an improvement in the achievements of most learners in the previous academic year following a decline in 2015/16. You recognise that you need to develop this further, particularly for level 3 full-time students and advanced apprentices.

Since the previous inspection, in collaboration with the local enterprise partnership with whom you and your team work closely, you have continued to invest in high-quality facilities which benefit learners and reflect industry standards. The college's new fleet of tractors and agricultural technology buildings enable agriculture and engineering students to learn using up-to-date machinery. The recently laid arena surfaces allow equine students to train horses in all weathers safely and the

glasshouses provide an excellent environment for students to learn cultivation and propagation of a wide variety of plant species.

Teaching of practical skills is mostly good. Students and apprentices develop good practical skills which are highly valued by them and by employers. Learners develop good levels of confidence in their own skills and knowledge. For example, sports students teach local school children to swim; agriculture students present their reflections on farm visits to peers; and outdoor activities students support other learners to develop skills in a range of physical outdoor pursuits. Learners are well-behaved, eager to learn and committed to their learning.

Almost all students who achieved their qualifications in 2016/17 progressed from their courses into positive destinations, such as employment or higher-level qualifications. All apprentices continued to work in the sectors related to their apprenticeship and many apprentices gained additional responsibility or promotion at work as a result of their apprenticeships. However, managers are slow to use information about students' and apprentices' destinations systematically enough to inform and influence decisions on the most beneficial courses and the curriculum.

Full-time students benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities and valuable work experience related to their courses. These enable students to experience working in their chosen sectors and develop appropriate employment and personal skills. Staff prepare students carefully for their external placements and students complete reflective diaries outlining what skills they develop. Staff promote health, fitness and well-being, including mental well-being and resilience, well. Managers arrange frequent guest speakers and external agencies on a range of topics such as autism, the function of the Royal Marines and farm health and safety.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, managers, staff and governors take appropriate and proportionate action to keep learners safe. Managers keep detailed records of any incidents and monitor these carefully, ensuring that actions are followed up and learners are supported well. Staff and governors have received training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty and fulfil their responsibilities diligently. The requirements of the 'Prevent' duty are met, and a comprehensive action plan details possible risks and how to mitigate these effectively.

Managers ensure that the legislative requirements for safer recruitment of new staff are met and they maintain an effective record of these, including for the single subcontractor.

Learners have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including online. Staff deliver effective lessons and tutorials on e-safety, bullying, diversity and the dangers of extremism, including those aspects currently affecting the rural and farming communities. Students enjoy these sessions and are able to discuss topics with knowledge and enthusiasm. Apprentices gain a slower understanding as

staff introduce relevant topics too late in their programme.

### **Inspection findings**

- Governors and senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the college very well. They have improved the use of data and key performance indicators to identify poor performance as well as stronger aspects and these are reflected effectively in recent self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans.
- Senior leaders have increased the rigour in accountability and performance monitoring since the previous inspection. Governors are well-informed and use detailed reports and meetings to challenge leaders and managers to improve. They support a number of recently introduced initiatives to bring about improvement, including enhanced staff training and a revised observation of teaching, learning and assessment process. You recognise that these initiatives have not yet brought about sufficient improvement in several of the weaker subject areas which were identified at the previous inspection and these are a high priority for leaders and managers.
- Managers have improved guidance and advice to learners at the beginning of their courses and the proportion of full-time students who remain on their courses, including adults, is increasing. As a result, your data shows that a high proportion of students below level 3 achieved their vocational qualifications in most subjects in 2016/17, and that the proportion of intermediate apprentices who achieved their apprenticeship remains high.
- The college has a very large proportion of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities compared to other local providers, representing just over half of learners. These learners achieved at least as well as all other learners in 2016/17, an improvement on the previous year. Staff continue to provide effective support to more vulnerable learners, including those with high needs and from disadvantaged backgrounds, to ensure that a high proportion are successful.
- Most teachers plan and manage practical sessions and theory lessons well to ensure that students make progress in their learning. For example, students on level 1 animal care use complex technical terminology for this point in their course, while level 3 learners on a military preparation course understand the impact of mental health on fitness. Students on foundation learning develop good teamwork skills through their horticulture work in the college gardens. They improve their confidence using the high-ropes course in sessions led effectively by supervised level 3 uniformed public services students.
- Leaders and managers are aware that not enough teachers and assessors challenge learners effectively, for example by setting learners work which makes them think more deeply or trying something more difficult than they may have mastered already. Inspectors observed uninspiring teaching from a minority of teachers. As a consequence, not all students and apprentices make the progress they are capable of quickly enough, particularly in theory lessons and especially in English and mathematics.
- The vast majority of teachers and assessors are good role models for learners.

Staff are very knowledgeable and have high levels of land-based sector experience. They ensure that learners become competent in relevant industry practices, including developing a full awareness of health and safety in what are high-risk sectors such as agriculture, forestry and equine. Most learners adopt these safe working practices quickly and effectively.

- Managers have revised learners' timetables for English and mathematics lessons and there is now better communication between vocational teachers and specialist English and mathematics teachers about learners' progress. As a result, learners' understanding of the importance of these subjects and their attendance at these lessons has improved.
- Students and apprentices demonstrate good development of mathematical skills related to their sectors. For example, agriculture students calculate feed ratios correctly, blacksmiths use geometry patterns to interpret designs and business administration apprentices use formulae appropriately to solve problems. However, learners' English skills are less well developed, partly as vocational teachers lack confidence in their own English skills such that they cannot provide the right level of support to learners. Not enough full-time students achieved high grades at GCSE in either English or mathematics, although a high proportion improved their grades, or achieved level 1 functional skills.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers and assessors provide sufficiently challenging work and use a wider variety of interesting and innovative activities in theory lessons
- a higher proportion of level 3 students and advanced apprentices achieve their qualifications
- improvements are made rapidly in developing learners' English and their wider mathematics skills and that a higher proportion achieve relevant qualifications
- initiatives to improve teaching, learning and assessment further are fully implemented quickly and include regular reviews of what impact they have on learning
- they develop vocational teachers' confidence in their use of English language skills to support their learners better
- they use data on learners' progression and destinations to make decisions on what courses provide the most benefit.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Flint  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors were assisted by the deputy principal for curriculum and quality as nominee. We met with senior and middle managers, members of the governing body, teachers and assessors, students and apprentices, and employers. We reviewed learners' work and college systems to monitor learners' progress and welfare. We observed teaching, learning and assessment, accompanied by college managers. We considered the views of learners through Ofsted's online questionnaire and face-to-face discussions. We also reviewed key college documents, for example those related to self-assessment and quality assurance, performance monitoring of staff and courses, and safeguarding.