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Mrs Gail Walker
Principal
Brooklands College
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Dear Mrs Walker

Short inspection of Brooklands College

Following the inspection on 1 and 2 November 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 December 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

Since your previous inspection, governors, leaders and managers have made sure that the college continues to provide consistently good education and training for students and apprentices. You, as the new principal, with your new senior leadership team, your governors and staff, provide a welcoming and safe environment for students. You have created an ambitious culture where staff and students are expected and are keen to do their best. Students celebrate their success in winning top awards in both national and regional competitions.

Senior leaders and governors are clear about the college's strengths and areas for improvement. You have maintained the strengths and successfully tackled the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Clear plans are in place to raise standards in the few areas that require further improvement. Your leadership team has high expectations for staff, students and apprentices. They challenge and support teachers and assessors effectively to improve provision. As a result, the large majority of students and apprentices make good progress.

Leaders and governors have created very positive and beneficial working relationships with local employers to make sure that local qualification and skills needs are met.

Students and apprentices enjoy being at the college and value their training. The large majority achieve their qualifications and progress to further training, education or employment. Your work with employers has led to a significant increase in the

number of apprenticeships. You have recently started work with new apprenticeship standards for laboratory technicians with King's College London.

Governors receive clear and frequent reports with detailed information about college performance. They challenge leaders, taking trouble to understand fully the reasons for the quality of provision. Leaders and governors acknowledge that they need to do more work to make Brooklands College an outstanding college.

Teaching, learning and assessment remain good but are not yet outstanding. A small minority of lessons do not challenge and interest the most able students.

Senior leaders support teachers effectively to improve their teaching skills. They have recently improved lesson observation procedures based on evidence from previous observation rounds and staff feedback. Teachers talk positively of improvements made in their teaching practice because of observation and the action planning that follows.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have maintained effective safeguarding arrangements since the previous inspection. Managers and staff make sure that students are safe and feel safe. Students know whom to talk to if they have any concerns. You and your staff continue to prioritise safeguarding. Staff deal with concerns promptly and use strong links with specialist local agencies when necessary.

Governors and staff at all levels have a good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty. Staff make sure that students and apprentices understand the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. As a result, students and apprentices are confident about how to protect themselves and others. Staff promote British values well, linking them effectively to well-publicised college values.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and managers quickly identify areas that require improvement through self-evaluation and quality improvement arrangements. This leads to concerted and usually effective action. The 2013 inspection noted poor achievement for adult learners; this is now an area of strength. However, improvements to the quality of written feedback on a minority of students' work are taking too long. As a result, a small number of students are not clear about what they need to do to improve.
- The whole-college self-assessment report is overly positive. It identifies clear key strengths and areas for improvement. However, the text of the self-assessment report does not deal with many of the identified areas for improvement. The bulk of the report text is celebratory rather than evaluative or self-critical.
- Teachers value the support of development coaches and can already identify ways that they are helping to improve standards in their subject areas. Senior leaders make good use of information gathered from previous rounds of

observations to direct the work of development coaches.

- Managers have focused on improving target setting for students since the previous inspection. They accurately identify weak areas and put effective actions in place to start to improve these. However, the quality of targets for students and apprentices still needs further improvement. In a minority of cases, they lack challenge and aspiration. Too many targets are qualification driven and do not focus on either skills or mathematics and English development.
- In the large majority of lessons, teaching, learning and assessment are consistently effective. Most students are developing new skills and making good progress. In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not plan learning that considers students' and apprentices' starting points to make sure that they all reach their full potential.
- Leaders and managers have a clear strategy to improve GCSE mathematics and English achievement. This includes the recent appointment of a manager for English and mathematics. Functional skills mathematics and English achievement rates were good, improved further in 2016/17 and are now excellent. The proportion of students that achieved high grades in GCSE mathematics in 2016/17 remained low. High grades in GCSE English declined in 2016/17, but they remain good, and above the rates in similar providers. Despite focused staff development, the minority of teachers do not yet routinely develop students' English and mathematical skills in vocational lessons.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should make sure that:

- they improve achievement rates for the small minority of subjects and apprenticeships that are below the national rates
- all students and apprentices are set high-quality, challenging targets that help them achieve their full potential
- they support all vocational staff to develop students' and apprentices' English and mathematical skills and increase the proportion of learners that achieve high grades in GCSE mathematics
- self-assessment reflects on and addresses identified strengths and weaknesses more fully.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Hill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Ofsted Inspectors were assisted by the deputy principal for curriculum and quality, as nominee. We met with you, members of the senior leadership and management team, members of the governing body, curriculum heads, teachers, assessors, students and apprentices. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment and reviewed students' work. We scrutinised key strategic and policy documents, including those related to safeguarding, quality assurance and the performance of provision. We analysed data on students' and apprentices' achievement and progress from their starting points and considered their views.