

# Hadlow College

Monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130733

**Name of lead inspector:** Andy Fitt, Her Majesty's Inspector

**Inspection date(s):** 20–21 June 2019

**Type of provider:** Specialist further education college

**Address:** Tonbridge Road  
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Tonbridge  
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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Hadlow College is a specialist land-based college, located on the edge of the village of Hadlow in Kent. It provides a range of vocational further and higher education courses as well as apprenticeships. The college is part of The Hadlow Group, which includes other further education colleges, a rural community school and a community pre-school. At the time of the visit, the college had just over 700 16–18 students and just under 900 adult students, as well as around 200 apprentices on a mixture of framework and standards apprenticeships.

In January 2019, the college was referred for formal Further Education (FE) Commissioner intervention. Following visits in February by the FE Commissioner and his team, the chair of the board of governors, vice-chair and six other external board members and the board clerk all resigned. The CEO/principal and deputy CEO/principal were suspended pending the outcome of an internal investigation and subsequently resigned. On 22 May 2019, the college was put into educational administration and the accountancy and business advisory firm BDO was appointed. The FE Commissioner is currently undertaking an options review to decide the future of Hadlow College.

### Themes

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that the quality of education programmes for learners remains high?** **Reasonable progress**

The interim principal, supported effectively by the educational administrators, senior leaders and the advisory group, has made sure that the education of students at the college has not been adversely affected. Leaders and managers have made sure that the actions they have taken have a beneficial impact on their students. Members of the new advisory group receive comprehensive reports to build their knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Given the very short time that the advisory board has existed, it is too early to see the impact of this body. Staff take great pride in the work they do. They have high levels of confidence in, and respect for, the current senior team.

Students enjoy their learning. They benefit from the high-quality resources and equipment that teachers use to develop their understanding of their industries well. They grow in confidence during their courses. They can say what they have learned and are clear about the skills they are developing. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities, which helps them with their next steps. For example, those on equine studies courses complete British Horse Society qualifications that employers value greatly. Students studying horticulture research the college's

nationally recognised collection of hellebores to improve their knowledge of these plants. They complete marketing posters and propagation schedules for plants in the nearby garden centre to improve their knowledge. Apprentices benefit from well-planned framework and standards-based programmes. Apprentices develop the skills, knowledge and workplace behaviours they need to be successful. Out of the 14 apprentices on the golf green-keeping apprenticeship standard, seven have so far achieved a distinction. Most students attend well, although overall attendance has declined slightly from 2017/18.

Leaders and managers have developed their systems to improve classroom performance. Well-respected advanced learning practitioners work closely and effectively with teachers and support staff to enhance their classroom skills. Teachers value the supported experiments they carry out, which help them improve teaching and learning. Leaders understand the need to improve the effectiveness of the way they track the long-term destinations of students in order to assess fully the impact of their courses.

### **What progress have leaders and managers made in arresting the decline in 16–18 achievements? Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers recognised the historical decline in achievement rates for students on study programmes. They planned carefully to improve student retention, which had declined since 2016/17. Current students benefit from improved initial advice to make sure that they are more aware of the requirements of their vocational courses. Leaders and managers identified the times when students would be most at risk of leaving their courses and introduced inspirational talks prior to these points. They made sure that parents and carers can access useful information on students' progress. They report to parents frequently on the progress that students make on their courses. As a result, substantially more students are staying at the college to complete their courses than in 2017/18.

Leaders and managers check and improve the quality of curriculum areas effectively. They support staff well to make changes that help more students to achieve their qualifications. For example, in November 2018, staff introduced GCSE re-sit examinations in English and mathematics. As a result, a much higher proportion of the small numbers of students taking these early examinations achieved grades 4–9 than in summer 2018. Students who have high needs make quick progress with their learning. Staff check the progress of these students very effectively. Teaching and support staff plan carefully to ensure that these students develop the social and employment-related skills they need to be successful in their next steps.

Students value and enjoy the courses that they study. They produce good-quality written and practical work. Almost all students know how well they are doing. Teachers provide detailed and useful feedback to students so that they understand how to improve their work. Staff use effective tracking systems to check and improve

students' progress. They identify quickly those at risk of falling behind and support them successfully to catch up. Most students are on track to achieve their target grades. Leaders identified that a few students, particularly those studying at level 2, lack aspiration to improve their work and gain the highest grades. They are working closely with staff to improve the quality of these students' work, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of their actions.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements continue to be in place? Reasonable progress**

Students feel safe and know how to report concerns. They understand the importance of health and safety in their practical work. They learn about this in detail during induction and in their vocational lessons. Students benefit from carefully planned tutorial programmes that improve their knowledge of a wide variety of topics to keep them safe and healthy. They know how to stay safe online. A suitable firewall stops students accessing inappropriate material. Staff are updating the college's information technology security systems to enable them to track in more detail any students causing concern; however, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of this.

Well-trained safeguarding staff record safeguarding concerns in detail. They deal with safeguarding referrals appropriately and keep records secure. They involve a wide range of external agencies if they need further help. Leaders and managers recruit staff safely. They check carefully their knowledge of safeguarding during interviews. All staff undergo appropriate security checks and safeguarding training when they start employment at the college. Staff receive frequent updates about safeguarding to make sure they understand their responsibilities. A member of the advisory group oversees the effectiveness of safeguarding in the college.

Leaders have detailed safeguarding policies in place which include their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty. They review all policies and procedures frequently to make sure that students stay safe. Staff have developed close links with local and regional bodies, including the 'Prevent' coordinator for further and higher education in the south east. They understand local threats to their students. Consequently, students know how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremism. Although students on equine studies courses understand this in detail, other students are less clear about how radicalisation and extremism may affect their day-to-day work.

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