

Queen Mary's College

Inspection report

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Type of provider: Sixth form college

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Information about the provider

1. Queen Mary's College is a large sixth form college in the borough of Basingstoke and Deane in north-east Hampshire, attracting learners from Basingstoke and the surrounding areas. This is a prosperous area and Basingstoke is a significant commercial location. However, the borough has small pockets of economic deprivation. The college provides courses in 11 of the 15 subject areas at all levels from pre-entry to advanced level, including significant provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. None of the maintained secondary schools in the area has a sixth form, but competition for post-16 places among Hampshire colleges is considerable. The number of students aged 16 to 18 on full-time courses has increased significantly over the past 10 years to well over 2,000 in 2008/09. Some 80% of the college's full-time students come from the borough. The area is also served by the Basingstoke College of Technology which is the main provider of vocational education programmes. Participation in post-16 education in Basingstoke has exceeded 85%, and is now higher than the average for the county. The proportion of the college's learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than in the local population.
2. Secondary schools in Basingstoke have average GCSE examination results compared with other areas of Hampshire. The college's links with local schools include the provision of specialist courses for Years 10 and 11 and curriculum development projects in dance and sport. The college also collaborates with local primary schools and its work in science with children up to Year 6 is of a high standard.
3. Adults on long courses accounted for fewer than 3% of full-time equivalent learners in the college in 2008/09. Most learners aged 16 to 18 are on advanced level courses. However, almost 25% of provision in the college is at foundation and intermediate level. More than 25% of students started at the college on advanced level courses with modest GCSE qualifications .
4. It is the mission of the college 'to build a learning community in Basingstoke and its region'.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners:	
Further education (16 to18)	2,321 full-time learners
Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment	60 full-time learners
Provision for adult learners:	
Further education (19+)	72 full-time learners

	538 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain	99 learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 1
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	1
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	
Science and mathematics	2
Sport, leisure, travel and tourism	2
English	2
Business	2

Overall effectiveness

- This is a good college with outstanding capacity to secure sustainable improvement in the quality of provision and outcomes for its learners. Outcomes for learners are good overall and in the subject areas inspected. Many students make outstanding progress on advanced level courses compared to their attainment on entry to this level of study. Students feel completely safe around the college which has a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. They talk enthusiastically, with good reason, about the ease with which they have made the transition from school and the way in which the college listens to, and acts upon, their views.
- As a result of the high standard of their work and the strong development of independent learning skills, students are equipped very well for further study and employment. The extent to which they are able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being is excellent and they make an

exceptional contribution to the college and the wider community, including raising money for local community groups.

7. Most lessons motivate and engage learners, and the better ones provide challenge and support for all students to fulfil their potential. Students benefit from frequent feedback on their progress, but there remain inconsistencies in the clarity of targets to enable them to know exactly what they need to do to improve their performance.
8. Lesson observations provide a reliable view of the quality of lessons and have contributed well to the improvement of teaching and learning. However, checks on the progress teachers have made in remedying areas for development from previous observations are not yet sufficiently systematic.
9. Outstanding leadership and management and governance have developed very successfully a mission and culture that places the Queen Mary's College at the heart of its community. The college's commitment to recruiting learners with a broad range of prior attainment has been realised by a very extensive range of provision that is tailored carefully to the needs and aspirations of individual students; by exceptionally strong partnership working and by outstanding care, guidance and support.

Main findings

- Outcomes for the college's students are good. The rate of improvement in success rates since the last inspection has been very strong. A-level success rates have been at, or above, the high national average for similar colleges in each of the past three years. Pass rates are high.
- Students make good progress on advanced level courses compared to their prior attainment and many make outstanding progress. The college has taken successful steps to reduce the inconsistency in students' progress across the range of subjects at this level.
- Students feel completely safe around the college as a result of the very good arrangements for safeguarding and the college's culture of support and inclusion.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Well-qualified and experienced teachers plan lessons that motivate and engage students. In most lessons, students benefit from a wide range of interesting learning activities. These lessons provide challenge for more able students and support all learners to achieve their full potential. In a minority of lessons, students have too few opportunities to participate and teachers set tasks for the whole group rather than meeting students' individual needs.
- Teachers make good use of the college-designed tracking and monitoring system to inform students of their progress and to record discussions from highly supportive individual tutorials. However, there remain inconsistencies in the precision of target-setting for improving students' performance.

- The college lesson observation process and subsequent staff development have continued to improve the quality of teaching and learning in most subjects. Lesson observations are regular and the feedback given to teachers is clear and supportive. However, insufficient checks are made to ensure that suggestions for improvement have had impact by the time of the next observation.
- The college facilitates the supported entry, at all levels of qualification, of students with lower prior attainment, while at the same time providing challenging opportunities for learners with higher entry profiles. The college offers good progression routes into advanced level courses and there is a broad range of GCE A and AS level, and BTEC national qualifications.
- Enrichment within the curriculum is extensive. Students are provided with supportive advice to guide them towards choices which enhance their ability to achieve intended progression outcomes, provide stretch and challenge and add to their enjoyment of the learning experience.
- The college makes an outstanding contribution to the wider community through its partnership work. It collaborates very successfully with a wide range of partners to enhance opportunity, participation, aspiration and achievement for its own students and the wider population.
- Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Students rightly place high value on the academic and pastoral support they receive from their teachers and tutors. Arrangements for initial assessment enable timely and highly accurate identification of learning support needs. Support is prompt and meets students' needs extremely well.
- The principal and senior managers of the college provide outstanding strategic leadership and management. The college's mission to build a learning community in Basingstoke and its commitment to attracting students from a wide ability range and background inform every aspect of the corporate decision-making process and are highly successful.
- Governance of the college is outstanding. Governors bring a high level and range of expertise to their role. They scrutinise and monitor all aspects of the college's work rigorously. The college makes exemplary use of these skills and expertise. For example, the project management of the new building has been achieved under budget and on time.
- Value for money is outstanding. Financial management and controls are very good. Financial planning is detailed, forward-looking and linked closely to the college's overall strategy. Resources and the newly-built facilities are outstanding.

What does Queen Mary's College need to do to improve further?

- Improve teachers' planning to meet more consistently the wide range of students' individual needs in lessons in order to ensure that students' progress across the range of subjects is consistently high.

- Develop more precision in target-setting for students in progress reviews, so that all students are involved in, and able to identify clearly, the incremental steps they must take to achieve their learning aims.
- Ensure that the lesson observation provides a systematic check on the progress teachers have made on areas for development from the previous observation.
- Strengthen formal arrangements for sharing good practice, so that students' achievements, the quality of teaching and learning, and the performance of curriculum areas are consistently high across the range of the college's work.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- how well the range of courses meets their needs
- the welcoming and friendly atmosphere of the college that enables them to make the transition from school with ease
- the comprehensive induction that prepares them very well for their time at the college
- the very high quality of the accommodation and resources
- knowing the progress they are making as a result of the quality and timeliness of feedback on their work
- the opportunity to become independent learners with the support of approachable teachers
- feeling very safe around the college
- how well the college listens to, and acts on, learners' views
- the very good additional support for learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the opportunities to gain additional qualifications to enhance their progression to further study and employment prospects.

What learners would like to see improved:

In a few instances:

- the consistency of personal tutorials across the college
- improved access to computers outside of timetabled lessons
- the amount of social space.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

10. Capacity to improve is outstanding. The rate of improvement in success rates since the last inspection has been well above that in the national average for similar colleges. The self-assessment report is a highly accurate reflection of the college's key strengths and areas for development and has been used extremely well to secure sustainable improvements in performance, including those areas for improvement from the last inspection.
11. Students rightly value the emphasis the college places on listening to, and acting on, their views. The college's mission to build a learning community in Basingstoke and its commitment to attracting students from a wide ability range and background inform every aspect of the college's work, and have created a culture that is successfully shared by the college's staff, students and governors. Governors use their expertise exceptionally well to raise standards, and to both support and challenge the senior leadership team in meeting challenging targets. The college provides outstanding value for money.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. Outcomes for learners are good. The rate of improvement in success rates since the last inspection has been very significant. Most students on advanced level courses take GCE A levels. Success rates in these have been at or above the high national average for similar colleges in each of the past three years and pass rates are high. Students make good progress on GCE A and AS levels and BTEC national qualifications compared to their prior attainment and many make outstanding progress. The college has taken successful steps to reduce the inconsistency in students' progress across the range of subjects at this level.
13. Success rates for the small proportion of learners at foundation and intermediate level are above average. Success rates in BTEC qualifications at intermediate and advanced level are above average. High grade pass rates at GCSE are well above national rates. Success rates in additional enrichment qualifications are mostly above average.
14. The college monitors the performance of different groups of learners carefully and to good effect. No significant differences exist in the achievement of different groups of learners.
15. Students feel very safe and are clear about actions to take should they feel they are subjected to bullying or discrimination. They rightly value the college as a friendly and harmonious environment and talk very enthusiastically about their studies and college life. Their attendance is good, although not yet meeting the college's ambitious target, and punctuality to lessons remains an area for improvement in a minority of the college's work.

16. The high standard of students' work and their development of strong independent learning skills equip students very well for further study and employment. Progression to further study within the college and into higher education institutions is very good. Examples of exceptional attainment are numerous and include students winning 37 medals in the United Kingdom Mathematics Challenge in 2008/09.
17. The extent to which students are able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being and make a positive contribution both to the college and wider communities is outstanding.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

18. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In most lessons, well-qualified and experienced teachers plan learning successfully and enthuse their students with interesting and stimulating activities. Lessons provide good challenge for more able students, including extension activities. Teachers and learning support assistants provide good, individual support for those students with identified learning needs. Teachers use questioning well to promote learning and challenge students' thinking. In a minority of lessons, more attention to planning for individual needs is required. In these lessons, students are not given sufficient opportunities to participate actively, and teachers set tasks for the whole group rather than meeting students' individual needs.
19. Resources and the newly built facilities are outstanding. Very high quality learning technology is used well in lessons to involve and inspire learners. Most classrooms are well equipped and have computers and interactive whiteboards. Teachers use them successfully to support learning and to help students to evaluate their progress, for example using enjoyable quizzes. Individual personal tutorials provide regular opportunities for students to discuss academic progress with their tutors, supported by access to a well-developed on-line student performance tracking and reporting system. There remains some inconsistency between personal tutors in the effectiveness of its use, mainly in relation to the quality of improvement action planning; but this variability is gradually reducing. Students understand their long-term targets, but short-term targets and how to achieve them are less clear.
20. Assessment is good. Teachers assess work promptly. Students value the detailed correction of their assignments and the helpful suggestions of how to improve their work. Teachers make very effective use of mini-whiteboards in lessons to evaluate students' progress.
21. The college lesson observation process and subsequent staff development are successful in improving the quality of teaching and learning in most subjects. Joint lesson observations by inspectors and college staff were closely aligned in identifying key strengths and areas for development. Lesson observations are regular and the feedback given to teachers is clear and supportive. However, insufficient checks are made to ensure that suggestions for improvement have made an impact on improving teachers' practice by the time of the next

observation. Promotion of equality and diversity is good and in the better planned sessions is integrated and explored well. However, not all lesson plans focus consistently well on how to reinforce understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity.

22. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interest of learners is outstanding. The college offers a very broad advanced curriculum, with a wide choice of GCE A and AS levels and BTEC qualifications. Foundation and intermediate courses provide good progression routes into further study. The adult learning provision has been designed carefully to meet specifically targeted needs, in particular for basic skills courses taught in community locations. The curriculum and entry arrangements are planned and managed to facilitate the supported entry, at all levels, of students with lower prior attainment, in line with the college's inclusive ethos. At the same time the college provides challenging and stretching opportunities for students with higher entry profiles. For example, students intending to enter medical schools and Oxbridge colleges are offered a tailored curriculum. The college undertakes careful and regular reviews of the offer to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of its students and enables them to achieve at high levels.
23. Enrichment within the curriculum is extensive. A wide range of additional qualifications is available in all subject areas. Students are provided with supportive advice to guide them towards choices which enhance their ability to achieve intended progression outcomes, provide stretch and challenge, and add to their enjoyment of the learning experience.
24. The college's contribution to the wider community through its partnership strategy is outstanding. The college has taken a leading role in the development of strong and effective partnerships in line with its well considered strategic vision for educational and social inclusion and higher levels of attainment in Basingstoke. The college plays a vital role in the local 14 to 19 strategic group and on work to develop the 14 to 19 Diplomas. Many college staff are involved directly in the management and operation of the partnerships. They ensure that partnership aims are highly successful in producing real outcomes for students. Some of the arrangements have wide-ranging community impact. For example, partnerships with primary schools for the teaching of basic skills courses on their premises are supporting people from hard-to-reach groups to access learning, raising the confidence and aspirations of these learners who in turn raise the aspiration and performance of their own primary-age children. Partnership arrangements with schools provide around 5,000 primary pupil visits per year, giving these pupils the opportunity to experience a science laboratory in the college tailored specifically to their needs, as part of a strategy to raise aspirations and engage young children with the excitement of science.
25. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Induction arrangements help students to settle into the college and their courses. Students place very high value on the academic and pastoral support they receive, formally and informally, from their teachers and tutors. Group tutorials provide a useful and

wide-ranging programme of information, updating, and introductions to issues related to Every Child Matters themes, which are then developed more fully in other college-wide activities. The college's initial assessment approach enables timely and highly accurate identification of additional learning needs and provides prompt, effective support. The provision of additional support, covering a spectrum of needs, is outstanding.

Leadership and management

Grade 1

26. The principal and senior managers of the college provide outstanding strategic leadership and management. The college's mission to build a learning community in Basingstoke and its commitment to attracting students from a wide ability range and background inform every aspect of the corporate decision-making process. All staff are highly committed to the culture of support and inclusion whilst ensuring that stretching targets for continuing improvement and student attainment are set and met. Exceptionally strong and sustainable partnership working is a feature of a management team who support, develop and nurture their local social and educational community. Collaborative work includes leading on the Basingstoke and Deane 14 to 19 consortium, and the development of primary and secondary school teaching staff through joint professional development. Students are encouraged to act as mentors for secondary school pupils to raise their awareness of further studies and the opportunities higher education can bring. This collaborative work has led directly to improved attainment and a greater number of students staying in education and training post-16. The many high-quality facilities at the college which include sports and gym facilities, swimming pool, science laboratories, dance and recording studios and the Central Studio Theatre are well used by the public.
27. Governance of the college is outstanding. Governors bring a high level and range of expertise to their role. They scrutinise and monitor all aspects of the college's work rigorously. The college makes exemplary use of these skills and expertise in, for example, the project management of the new building achieved under budget and on time. Governors have a very good understanding of the key issues and challenges facing the college.
28. The promotion of safeguarding is very good. The college places strong emphasis on students' health, safety and well-being. The newly formed child protection group supports appropriate interventions for students where needed. Staff training to identify the signs of abuse is good. Safe working practices are promoted successfully and there is effective internet security. Vulnerable students are well protected. Students are involved fully in the evaluation and further development of safeguarding practices. The college has very good links with external agencies who share responsibility for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Risk assessments of external users of college facilities are thorough. The college records and responds well to all incidents. The college has completed statutory Criminal Records Bureau checks and has a single register of all those required. The college is well prepared for the future

new legislative requirements. All staff, governors and sub-contracted staff have received training in safeguarding and are fully aware of their responsibilities.

29. Arrangements for quality improvement and self-assessment are good. Action to improve areas of underachievement has been successful, although there remain some inconsistencies in performance across subject areas. Quality improvement arrangements are good and the lesson observation process is accurate and linked closely to staff development and training. The college's self-assessment process is robust and the report gives an open and highly accurate account of the key strengths and areas for improvement. In most curriculum areas, students' views are used well. The college has a clear understanding of the work it has to do to improve further.
30. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college has appropriate policies and action plans to meet its duties in relation to race, gender and disability. The profile of equality and diversity has been raised through training for staff and governors. Staff speak positively about the impact of this training on their teaching practice and their subsequent ability to raise and maintain the profile of diversity and inclusion in everyday college life. Promotion throughout the curriculum and through a broad range of cross-college and themed events is good and students value the college's inclusive ethos. Thorough monitoring and analysis of data relating to all aspects of equality are used actively and effectively to promote improvements.
31. The college provides outstanding value for money. Financial management and control are very good. Financial planning is detailed, forward-looking and linked closely to the college's overall strategy, with very good risk management.

Subject areas

Science and mathematics

Grade 2

Context

32. The area offers a range of GCSE mathematics and science qualifications. At advanced level, the provision comprises GCE A and AS level qualifications in chemistry, physics, mathematics, further mathematics, use of mathematics, biology, psychology, and applied science. Of the 2,559 enrolments, 96% are for students aged 16 to 18 studying full time.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Students achieve extremely well in A-level chemistry, A-level mathematics and AS further mathematics. The proportion of students achieving A* to C grades in GCSE science is significantly above the national average. Students' progress compared to their prior attainment is also outstanding for chemistry, physics and mathematics. In 2008/09 the college's students won 37 medals in the United Kingdom Mathematics Challenge.
- Students feel completely safe and enjoy their work. Teachers and students pay good attention to health and safety. Students contribute positively to the community through voluntary work in both the college and local community.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. In most lessons, teachers use a range of activities to motivate and engage students. Learning resources, such as course booklets, are of a very good standard and much appreciated by the students. However, teachers place insufficient emphasis on the planning of teaching and learning to meet precisely the range of students' individual needs in the classroom.
- Use of information learning technology (ILT) in teaching and learning is good. Teachers and students use the virtual learning environment (VLE) both in the classroom and remotely to access various high-quality resources, many of which have been devised by the teachers themselves. Students value highly the revision exercises, course booklets and interactive materials available.
- The broad and flexible provision meets the needs of students very closely, especially in mathematics, enabling good progression from foundation to advanced level. The introduction of use of mathematics at intermediate and advanced level has been successful in meeting students' needs. Applied science at both AS and A level meets students' needs for vocational courses well.
- Collaboration with higher education institutes and other organisations is very strong and these links enhance the provision, providing students with a valuable experience to take forward into further study or employment. Activities include workshops and lectures, work shadowing and work experience.
- Links with local schools within the community are outstanding. The college runs training for school teachers to enable them to update their skills and has

established a science centre in the college to promote science with primary school children. The area also contributes well to the schemes for gifted and talented pupils in these schools.

- Support for learning is outstanding and much valued by the students. The highly committed staff offer their time freely to provide extra workshop support on a regular basis. This occurs within all subject areas and contributes greatly to the success of the students.
- Leadership and management of the area are good and the provision gives outstanding value for money. Self-assessment is accurate and leads to systematic improvements with a very clear focus on the views and needs of the students, especially those at risk of not completing their studies successfully.
- The lesson observation process is rigorous. However, evaluations do not always reflect fully the grade awarded and observers always ensure that observations capture the monitoring of areas for development in successive observations. Peer observation and the sharing of good practice are areas for further development.
- Facilities are outstanding. The recently opened science building is spacious, well designed and equipped. Training opportunities for teaching staff are good and cover a range of areas including equality and diversity and child protection.

What does Queen Mary's College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the planning for teaching and learning takes into account more precisely the range of individual learner needs in order to ensure that all students make good or better progress.
- Following lesson observations, ensure that reports and evaluation summaries in lesson observation records reflect the grade more fully and that they capture teachers' progress in their areas for development identified in previous observations.

Sport, leisure, travel and tourism

Grade 2

Context

33. The college offers a range of courses in sport, leisure, travel and tourism with clear progression routes for learners from foundation to advanced level. Some 592 students study full-time courses in this area. Of these, two thirds are male. The majority of students are on advanced level courses, but some 25% are on intermediate and 15% on foundation level courses. About 420 learners from across the college participate in the football academy and sports teams.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are above national averages with high pass rates on many sport courses. Students make good progress relative to their starting points. In the national diploma in sport and the A level in physical education students' progress is excellent.
- Success rates on AS-level physical education and AS-level travel and tourism courses are below national averages and students do not always make sufficient progress. High grade passes in all travel and tourism courses are below national averages.
- Students demonstrate good practical skills. A supportive and competitive sporting environment produces county and national standard students and elite performers. Students enjoy their work and are successful in college competitive sports teams.
- Students work safely in practical lessons and feel very safe and supported in a caring, inclusive environment.
- Students develop excellent coaching skills, knowledge and understanding that are relevant to the sports industry. Students demonstrate these through productive community volunteering schemes. Their progression rates into employment and higher education are very good.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and the college has high expectations of its students on their academic and sporting programmes. Teachers use their up-to-date vocational expertise well to develop successfully students' employment skills. However, in theory lessons, teachers do not always plan to provide tailored extension activities with appropriate challenge for all students.
- Support for learning is good and meets closely the needs of those learners identified during initial assessments. Students benefit from regular and individual timetabled support and additional workshops.
- An excellent range of vocational qualifications provide employability skills for the sports industries, and students value these highly. The college provides very well resourced sports academies and sports facilities.
- Leadership and management are good. Leaders promote high standards and expectations from staff and students. Excellent sports facilities enhance

students' development of good practical sports skills. Course teams monitor outcomes closely and improve standards through regular, systematic tracking of student success and attendance. Staff promote equality and diversity well and make good use of data to monitor the performance of different groups of students.

What does Queen Mary's College need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates on AS physical education and travel and tourism courses by taking into account the new syllabus changes and monitoring and tracking students' performance more precisely prior to, and during practical coursework..
- Ensure that all theory lessons incorporate appropriately challenging extension activities so that students' attainment and progress are consistently high across the range of provision.

English

Grade 2

Context

34. Some 840 students, mostly aged 16 to 18 on full-time courses, study English at the college. The majority of students are female. The college offers advanced level courses in English language, literature, and language and literature. Approximately 150 students take GCSE English and around 30 students study for the IGCSE. The college offers also a small number of literacy and ESOL courses, at foundation and intermediate level, taken mainly by full-time students.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates in A-level English language and English literature are high and above the national average for sixth form colleges. However, in English language and literature, the success rate at A level and AS level is below average. In GCSE the proportion of students achieving grades A* to C is high. Students make good progress overall in comparison with their prior attainment and particularly so in A-level English language.
- Students enjoy their studies and work with enthusiasm. However, their punctuality to lessons, although improved, remains an area for development. In A-level lessons, students confidently use technical and subject-specific vocabulary to describe and discuss linguistic and literary devices.
- Teaching and learning are good and the self-assessment report identifies correctly inconsistency in the quality of lessons. The large majority of students experience good teaching, but in a minority of lessons it is satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned and allow students to play an active part in their learning.
- Good use of information learning technology (ILT) in most lessons enhances learning and a range of teaching and support materials is available to students within a virtual learning environment (VLE). Learning assistants provide good support in lessons for those who need additional help with their studies.
- In too many lessons teachers plan insufficient extension activities and challenge for the higher-attaining students. In a minority of lessons, tasks to be carried out by groups of students are not always explained clearly enough.
- The assessment of students' work is good. Students appreciate the fact that it is set regularly and returned promptly. Teachers' comments are encouraging and give students a clear idea of the standard of the work and of how it might be improved. Both teachers and students make good use of an electronic assessment tracking system using software developed by the college.
- A good variety of subjects in English meets the needs and interests of students well. English is offered at GCE A and AS level in all three main English subjects. In addition to GCSE English, a practical English course is provided at intermediate level for students on vocational courses. A small cohort of

students takes the IGCSE each year. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities that include a creative writing club.

- Support for students is good. Students value the regular one-to-one tutorials and speak highly of the support they receive. Students appreciate the good, timely support and advice in making applications to higher education institutions.
- Curriculum management is good. Actions to improve the standard and timely completion of AS-level coursework have been successful. The self-assessment report identifies accurately the subject area's main strengths and areas for development. The action plan addresses all those areas, but targets within the plan are not sufficiently clear or measurable to make systematic improvements. Teachers know their students well and show good awareness of issues that may affect their studies.
- Schemes of work identify appropriately opportunities to promote equality and diversity, and teachers choose texts carefully with this in mind. A 'Diversity in Literature' notice board has been set up on which work is displayed which embodies the diversity of literature in both its subject matter and the cultural identity of writers. However, not all opportunities that arise in lessons to promote equality and diversity are taken up by teachers.
- Staff appraisals are well written and most have clear, measurable targets. Reports on observations of staff carried out by the curriculum manager are detailed. Staff attend subject update conferences and other training regularly. However, arrangements to share good practice in teaching and learning are insufficiently systematic.
- Classrooms occupied by the English department are very well set out with a wide range of resources including good examples of students' work. An interesting collage in the foyer of the building, entitled 'A thousand years of English', sets the tone well for what is a very good learning environment.

What does Queen Mary's College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of students' success in English at advanced level by further development of the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning across all courses.
- Develop resources and extension activities, for all lessons, to stretch more able students so that they fulfil their potential.
- Ensure that action plans arising from self-assessment reports have clear, measurable targets to drive improvement, so that students' achievement is consistently high across the range of provision.

Business

Grade 2

Context

35. Around 722 students follow GCE A-level and AS-level courses in business studies, economics and law. A further 96 students are enrolled on BTEC first and national courses. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18, and they all attend full time.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Success rates are very high on the BTEC first diploma, GCE A level business studies, GCE A and AS level applied business studies and GCE A level economics. Pass rates are very high and the proportion of high grades is significantly higher than national averages for similar colleges. Many students have low prior attainment and reach grades well above predictions, representing outstanding progress for these students.
- Retention and punctuality have improved on all courses since the last inspection, and overall, retention is around national averages. Attendance and punctuality are monitored closely, but too many students disrupt the start of lessons by arriving late.
- Students enjoy learning and produce high standards of oral and written work. They are able to express ideas articulately and confidently, and have a good grasp of how current events impact on businesses. Their personal, social and analytical skills improve significantly during their studies. Behaviour is good, and students treat each other with respect. They work safely and feel safe in college. Progression for advanced level students into higher education is good.
- Teaching and learning are good. Students are inspired by enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff who use their commercial experience well to bring realism to lessons. Teachers use ICT imaginatively, and employ successfully a wide range of interactive strategies to meet students' needs. They mark work promptly and constructively. In a small minority of lessons, group activities are not well managed, and individual needs are not met sufficiently.
- Learning resources are good. Particularly well-designed group activities and quizzes develop students' knowledge and understanding well. There is good access to computers, and most students make extensive use of the VLE. However, as confirmed by inspectors, students reported that they sometimes have difficulty accessing computers outside lessons.
- The college uses its educational and business links well to meet the needs of students. Students enhance their learning with a good range of enrichment activities, including participation in national banking and debating competitions, and mock trials for law students. Visiting speakers include magistrates, politicians and business entrepreneurs. Progression routes are planned well, and the college works very well with two local universities to ease students' transition to higher education.

- Care, guidance and support are outstanding in helping students to achieve their expectations. Staff are very approachable, and give excellent one-to-one support in lessons and individual tutorials. Learning support assistants are deployed well in intermediate business lessons, and law students value law workshops run at lunch times.
- Advice and guidance are good throughout the students' programmes. Induction is comprehensive and prepares students well for their courses. Progress reviews are held regularly, and discussion is recorded well. However, target setting is insufficiently precise, and targets are often not specific or time-bound.
- Curriculum management is good, effectively raising aspirations and outcomes for students with low prior attainment. Communications are good and there is much sharing of good practice through team meetings, cross-college activities, and staff development.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Social inclusion is good. Staff use data well and successfully take action to improve any identified differences in performance. Visiting speakers from business include male and female business entrepreneurs. Teachers incorporate skilfully equality and diversity issues within lessons wherever appropriate opportunities arise.
- Students are consulted regularly through forums, feedback questionnaires and evaluations. However, students are not always sufficiently aware of action taken as a result of their comments.
- The self-assessment report is thorough and broadly reflects the findings of inspectors. The action planning is robust, and has resulted in many improvements to provision. The observation of teaching and learning is rigorous, and has resulted in much improved teaching and learning. Closer monitoring and tracking have improved retention and punctuality. The VLE now provides extensive materials and information for students, and the college has invested heavily in ILT equipment for students.

What does Queen Mary's College need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the focus on improving student retention and punctuality through close monitoring and support to bring these up to college targets.
- Improve target setting in progress reviews by sharing good practice, to ensure that milestone targets are specific and time bound.

Information about the inspection

36. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the college's assistant principal for partnerships, progression and quality assurance, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
37. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)			
Provider Name:	Queen Mary's College	Inspection No	345838
Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full-time and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including E2E); 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships Blank Column: insert DWP employability programmes (including Workstep), or Judicial Services or nextstep as appropriate			

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners at the time of inspection					
Full-time learners	2300		2300		
Part-time learners	530		530		
Overall effectiveness	2		2		
Capacity to improve	1				
A. Outcomes for learners					
A. Outcomes for learners	2		2		
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	2				
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1				
A3. How safe do learners feel?	1				
A4. Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	1				
A5. How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	1				
B. Quality of provision					
B. Quality of provision	2		2		
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1				
B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1				
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1				
C. Leadership and management					
C. Leadership and management	1		1		
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1				
C2. How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	1				
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2				
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1				
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2				
C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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