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Mr Nick Juba
Chief Executive
City College Brighton and Hove
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Dear Mr Juba

Short inspection of City College Brighton and Hove

Following the short inspection on 19 and 20 October, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the college was judged to be good in June 2011.

This provider continues to be good.

Your learners continue to receive good quality education and training. They often make good progress on their courses, many achieve well, and their progression to employment and higher education is good. They develop good skills in their vocational areas and for wider employment. Students feel safe in college and well-supported to develop their personal and career aspirations. Their learning takes place in good-quality, appropriately resourced venues.

Since the previous inspection, the college has faced significant challenges, both in relation to its finances and in maintaining the quality of provision for learners. Over the last year, the new leadership team, now firmly established, and the accomplished, largely new, board of governors, have successfully implemented effective strategies to raise standards and ensure financial stability. They have also skilfully reviewed the position of the college within its local communities and set clear priorities for its work, including greater contributions to the work of local businesses.

Leaders and managers continue to place learners, and improving the quality of provision, at the heart of their work. Your expectations of curriculum managers are heightened. Programme area manager roles have been consolidated into new head of curriculum roles, with greater responsibility and accountability, not only for further education, but also higher education, apprenticeships and commercial courses. Their

roles and responsibilities also reflect your intention to place the college, once again, at the centre of the work of local businesses.

You have strengthened leaders' and managers' capacity to maintain the quality of provision and to further improve. A new quality team and framework has been introduced and you have developed specific job and person specifications to ensure the continued focus of managers on high-quality teaching and learning. The quarterly performance review meetings, between programme area managers and the executive team, thoroughly monitor improvement and take clear action where necessary. The senior leadership team are held to account by governors, who rigorously review the quality of provision and learners' outcomes.

You have a good understanding of the quality of your teaching, learning and assessment. Your programme of formal lesson observations, learning walks, learner voice surveys, learner forums and learners survey, where they comment on their individual teachers, provide a sound basis for further improvement.

All of the small number of areas for improvement specifically noted at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. Apprenticeship outcomes are much improved; the expansion of apprenticeship opportunities for learners is a major college initiative, and lesson observation records now provide good details of the characteristics of teaching and learning, to help improvement.

Overall, and especially during the last year, you have paid particular and successful attention to improving standards of teaching, learning and assessment and to seeing this reflected in the improvement of learners' outcomes.

Learners' achievements are good for the large majority of classroom-based provision, and especially so for those on level 1 and level 3 courses. Although achievement on level 2 courses is still relatively high, learners perform less well overall, particularly adults. Your learners on GCSE English courses achieve particularly well, with 70% achieving high grades in 2015/16. In mathematics, 40% achieved a high grade, which is well above the national rate, but requires improvement. Achievement in functional skills mathematics has improved over three years to a good rate, but in English achievement has fallen over three years and requires improvement.

Your learners often make good progress on their courses. Overall, in 2015/16, vocational level 3 students made better than expected progress, based upon their prior attainment, with very few courses where they did not.

For apprenticeships, after a significant decrease in achievement in 2013/14, leadership of apprenticeship provision has been overhauled, resulting in continued improvements, to above national rates in 2015/16, for both overall and timely achievement.

Teaching and learning are good in most lessons, although too little is outstanding. Teachers often use good questioning techniques that involve learners and create discussions that reinforce learning. They ensure that learners understand the purpose of activities. Learners often make good progress in their work, developing independent learning and thinking skills. However, teachers do not always make the best use of individualised learning plans to help maximise learners' progress, too often setting insufficiently specific and incremental targets to support learners' particular learning needs.

Learners are respectful towards each other and to staff. They work collaboratively and enjoy sharing knowledge, and actively participate to complete tasks, reflecting industry practices, to a timed deadline.

In practical lessons and apprenticeship assessments, learners' vocational skills development is good. In mathematics and English lessons, they develop good literacy and numeracy skills, including those they need for their assessments. Learners' spelling and grammatical mistakes are corrected by teachers.

Teachers' feedback to learners on assessment of learning is sound with often frequent reviews, with detailed areas of improvement and appropriate targets for further development. Assessments and reviews for apprentices are largely thorough, but in a few subject areas they require improvement.

As you recognise in your own action plans for improvement, learners' attendance and punctuality require improvement. Teachers insufficiently challenge learners and do not sufficiently emphasise to learners the potential damage to their learning from lateness and non-attendance.

Study programmes for learners aged 16 to 19 are well managed and meet all requirements for these programmes, including suitable work experience or work-related activity, and study for English and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements continue to be highly effective and that prompt action is taken to safeguard the college's learners, both within the college and, often, in their wider local communities. Since the previous inspection, you have kept pace with the various changes to safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty.

Leaders and managers, including governors, ensure that actions against safeguarding plans are rigorously reviewed and quality assured. Your commitment to keep pace with the changing needs of safeguarding in Brighton is exemplified by your recent decision to fund the appointment of a mental-health practitioner, to address the much greater profile of mental-health issues that your safeguarding reveals. This will be of great help to your learners.

An assistant principal takes the lead on safeguarding and chairs the particularly valuable and proactive safeguarding board. All policies and procedures are up to date, safer recruitment is well established and risk assessment is well used to help plan safeguarding actions.

Obligations under the 'Prevent' duty are well met and staff and learners have been appropriately introduced to the areas that they need to know about, including the risks of extremism and radicalisation. Apprentices do not yet have a sufficiently complete understanding, but planned training will address this need shortly.

Inspection findings

- The leadership and management of the college are good. In a relatively short period of time, the new senior leadership team, working particularly effectively with governors, has recovered the college's financial position and ensured that learners benefit from good-quality provision and outcomes.
- Leaders and managers make sure that learners, and the quality of their teaching and learning, continue to be at the heart of the college's work. Leaders have significantly enhanced the accountability of managers and staff in pursuit of this key aim, as they work to well-founded targets for improvement.
- Governors play a very important role in deciding the priorities for the college, especially at the time when it seeks to re-establish a significant role in working closely and productively with its local communities, including employers. Leaders and managers are productively active in working with key local strategic partners in pursuit of the college playing its full part to meet Brighton's education and skills needs.
- Outcomes for learners are good overall, with both learners and apprentices often achieving well. Many learners make better progress on their courses than expected, based upon their previous attainment. Learners' progression to employment and further or higher education is good. Overall achievement is too low for learners on level 2 courses, especially for adults, and for functional skills English and GCSE mathematics.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that the quality of provision for learners remains good. Most learners benefit from good teaching and learning, and apprentices from well-planned and executed training, with both developing good vocational practical skills and skills in English and mathematics.
- Teachers' target-setting for learners' progress is not consistently good and individualised learning plans are insufficiently focused on learners' particular needs.
- Learners' punctuality and attendance require improvement. Although most attend regularly and punctually, too many do not and their progress is slowed.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that the college's capacity to improve is good. Quality improvement arrangements are good, including the range of measures for judging the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Very good use is made of learners' views as part of this process.

Next steps for the provider

In pursuit of their aim to become an outstanding provider, leaders and managers should ensure that:

- teaching and learning are consistently good or better, with more that are outstanding, paying particular attention to teachers' use of target-setting for their learners' improvement and progress, and that individualised learning plans are fully used to help meet the individual needs of learners
- building on the good practice, learners' attendance and punctuality are consistently good and that they all understand how important this is if they are to make best progress
- learners' achievement improves further and is consistently good, especially for adults on level 2 courses and for learners studying GCSE mathematics and functional skills English
- through the imminent further training on 'Prevent', all apprentices understand the aspects of extremism and radicalisation as relevant to them.

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

Yours sincerely

David Martin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors were assisted by the principal, as nominee. We met with you and your management team, teachers, learners, and governors. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment, and reviewed learners' written work. We reviewed key policies and documents, including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We also considered the views of learners and employers.