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Dr Stephen Dowbiggin OBE
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Dear Dr Dowbiggin

Short inspection of Capel Manor College

Following the short inspection on 29 and 30 November 2016, 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 January 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection, governors, senior leaders and managers have continued to develop their excellent links with local, regional and national land-based employers and organisations to ensure that students have access to high-quality learning resources and work-experience placements. As a consequence, the vast majority of 16- to 18-year-old learners complete high-quality work experience placements as part of their study programme and most learning takes place in industry standard environments using up-to-date equipment and resources.

Senior leaders are working effectively to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, to ensure that higher proportions of younger learners, adult learners and apprentices achieve their qualifications. They are acutely aware of the low prior attainment of the majority of younger learners and how their college experience needs to improve further to enable them to be successful and move on to either training at a higher level or employment.

Senior leaders have put in place very well developed plans to enhance further the practical and learning facilities at all college campuses, particularly those at outreach centres, where they are not at the same high standard as those at the main site. Senior leaders have established good access to land-based education for learners in the region through good relationships with the Greater London Authority.

Safeguarding is effective.

Managers who are responsible for safeguarding continue to operate very effective systems to keep learners safe. Managers check thoroughly that those appointed to

new roles at the college are suitable to work with young people and that they receive training in safeguarding promptly when they commence employment. Staff receive update training on safeguarding at least annually, which they apply effectively when potential safeguarding incidents occur for learners.

Senior leaders and managers ensure that the college sites, several of which are open to the public, are managed appropriately to keep learners safe and to enable them to benefit from interaction with visitors, which prepares them well for the industries they wish to enter.

Managers and staff make very good use of college support staff, such as counsellors and welfare advisers, and external agencies, such as the police and social services, to support and protect learners who experience challenging episodes in their lives. Staff responsible for safeguarding investigate any incidents thoroughly and sensitively, keeping comprehensive records of investigations, which they analyse often and report to governors on an annual basis.

Managers have made an effective start in helping learners to understand the dangers of extremism and radicalisation and how to keep themselves safe from these. All learners aged 16 to 18 complete a safeguarding qualification during their induction period to help them understand these dangers better and the vast majority achieve this qualification. However, students need to develop a greater understanding of the dangers that relate to them in their daily lives and in their chosen land-based sectors, such as animal rights' extremism.

Teachers ensure that students and apprentices learn to work safely in the potentially high-risk industries for which they are training. Students and apprentices understand risk assessment and they work with very close attention to their personal safety and that of their colleagues when working with chemicals, machinery, tools and animals.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders and managers have identified accurately which courses are performing less well and need to improve. They have introduced a system of close scrutiny and action planning, with frequent reviews of progress to ensure that these courses improve this academic year. Students' attendance, and the proportion of students who remain on their courses, have improved appreciably this academic year when compared to the same point in time in the previous year, as a result of the actions implemented to date. The pace of improvement is gaining momentum, but senior leaders and governors recognise that this has not been rapid enough in previous academic years.
- Learners in most subjects, including horticulture, floristry, saddlery and arboriculture, develop very good practical skills as a result of teaching by well-qualified and experienced teachers and assessors. They learn to work safely and competently in practical lessons and virtually all 16- to 18-year-old learners and a high proportion of adult learners develop these skills further as a result of completing high-quality work experience placements. However, level 3 students in animal management, particularly those who already have a level 2 qualification

in this subject, do not develop their practical skills quickly enough during college-based practical lessons.

- Teaching and learning on most courses and for all provision types are helping students make good progress with the development of their knowledge and understanding about their chosen subjects. However, a minority of teaching at level 3, mostly in animal management, is not sufficiently challenging for the learners and does not build effectively on the learning and understanding they gained from achieving a level 2 qualification in that subject.
- The majority of teachers are skilled at linking theory and practice well in classroom-based lessons. They use very appropriate examples from learners' practical lessons, learning at work and work-experience placements to help learners deepen their understanding of their subject effectively.
- Learners studying for qualifications in English and mathematics at levels 1 and 2 do not achieve these at a high enough rate. Teachers help learners develop their mathematics skills in vocational lessons very well, for example level 1 students in a balloon artistry lesson were able to calculate the cost of their designs accurately and work out the profit they would make at various selling prices. However, teachers are less adept at developing learners' English skills well in vocational lessons.
- Learners have a sense of pride in their college and they develop further their interest and passion in their chosen subject. They value highly the help, support and guidance they receive from staff, especially when they have not had positive experiences of education previously. Adult learners value the support they receive from staff, particularly when they are returning to education to train in a new industry to help them embark on a new career.
- Learners behave well, respect their teachers, peers and surroundings, and develop their skills for work very well. As a result, they are able to transfer these behaviours to the workplace, either during work-experience placements, volunteering at college open events or in part-time jobs. Examples of learners gaining part-time work as a result of their performance and conduct on work-experience placements are numerous.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a higher proportion of students, particularly those on vocational qualifications at levels 2 and 3 and those studying for qualifications in English and mathematics at levels 1 and 2, achieve these
- managers respond rapidly and effectively to improve courses where learners do not currently achieve well, and ensure that learners have a consistently good experience across the college's various sites and programmes of study
- students studying animal management at level 3 develop good practical skills quickly
- learners develop a greater understanding of how to keep themselves safe from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation, particularly those which relate specifically to the communities in which they live and the land-based sectors they wish to enter.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Pemble
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Ofsted Inspectors. We were assisted by the deputy principal as nominee. We visited four college sites to observe teaching, learning and assessments and to look at students' and apprentices' work. We met with students, apprentices, governors, senior leaders, managers and teachers. We reviewed key documents, including the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, data related to the performance of students and apprentices currently on programmes, and those related to safeguarding. We considered the views of learners and employers.