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Ms Ann Turner
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Dear Ms Turner

Short inspection of Myerscough College

Following the short inspection on 1 and 2 March 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 June 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

You, your leadership team and governors set high expectations for your learners and staff, with clear priorities to improve the quality of provision and develop the skills of teaching staff. You provide high-quality vocational learning that responds to local, regional and national needs, while maintaining a strong financial position. You have invested in improving resources to create a better learning environment, with purpose-built accommodation for your different curriculum areas, which is equipped to a high commercial standard. Learners continue to benefit from excellent resources, which teachers use well to ensure good development of learners' commercial vocational skills.

You and your leadership team have successfully improved the majority of areas requiring improvement identified at the last inspection. You, your governors and senior managers rigorously monitor the effects of actions for improvement and ensure that managers are accountable for the quality of provision. You and your senior managers use a comprehensive range of data to quickly identify areas of underperformance.

Your self-evaluation and improved quality-improvement arrangements are correctly identifying weaker areas of your provision and you take appropriate steps to tackle areas that need improvement. Managers monitor rigorously the implementation of your detailed and specific improvement plan. You and your leadership team responded swiftly in 2014/15 to reverse a decline in the achievement of learners. As a result, learners' achievements in 2015/16 were significantly higher. However,

achievement for learners on adult courses remains just below national rates.

High-quality teaching and learning are the greatest priority for you and your leadership team and are, therefore, a strong focus of the college's work. More robust quality-improvement arrangements, which include the observation of teaching, learning and assessment, have been introduced. As a result, there is a stronger link between the outcome of observations, staff development and performance management. Teachers are supported well in developing their skills, and opportunities to share good practice through peer observations are now firmly in place.

You and your leadership team, governors, managers and college staff work hard to develop a shared culture of ensuring that there are 'opportunities for all to succeed' through the development of an inclusive environment where diversity is valued by all. College values are promoted well by staff. Learners and staff are tolerant and respectful of each other. Learners from different cultures and backgrounds work together harmoniously. Teachers ensure that learners with high needs make good progress. Personalised programmes help learners with high needs to improve their confidence, become more independent and progress into further study or employment. You and your leadership team have improved the promotion of equality and diversity. Managers accurately identify any particular groups of learners who do not achieve as well as others and implement effective actions to resolve differences. Consequently, there are now no significant differences in achievement based on gender, ethnicity or disability.

You have implemented the introduction of 16 to 19 study programmes, which represent the majority of your provision, highly effectively. Study programmes provide learners aged 16 to 19 with high-quality work-related activities and purposeful work experience, which link to their longer-term employment aspirations.

Governors have a good understanding of the college's key priorities and areas for improvement, and provide challenge to you and your leadership team. Governors contribute fully to developing the college's strategic priorities and have a clear view of both local and regional needs.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff and learners understand the system for reporting safeguarding concerns, and to whom they need to report. Designated safeguarding officers have the appropriate qualifications for their role, and all staff and governors complete mandatory safeguarding training. The highly trained safeguarding team is meticulous and thorough in recording and monitoring any issues that arise. They have a full and detailed understanding of all safeguarding referrals, which has resulted in timely and appropriate interventions. Managers have good relationships with their local social services and police forces, and use them effectively to protect vulnerable learners. They ensure that staff are aware of local safeguarding concerns through briefings and training.

Managers ensure that appropriate recruitment procedures are followed, with comprehensive security checks of job applicants' suitability.

Learners feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe. Alongside the activities in the tutorial programme, staff and learners arrange a significant number of events to support learners' understanding and recognition of matters relating to safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Learners are clear about the dangers of extremism and radicalisation and about keeping themselves safe on the internet. Learners develop a strong awareness of safe working practices through online interactive programmes, the tutorial programme and their vocational teachers. As a result, learners have a good level of understanding of how to keep themselves safe in their vocational work.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and managers have ensured that the curriculum has continued to develop to meet the needs of learners, employers and the local and regional community. Senior leaders have maintained and further developed their wide external links locally, regionally and internationally within the land-based sector, resulting in the curriculum reflecting the most up-to-date working practice. Leaders and managers work effectively with local businesses and other partners to ensure that the curriculum is current, supports learners' job prospects and provides opportunities for learners to progress into employment. Teachers use their commercial understanding and knowledge of their industries well to improve learners' work-related skills, ensuring that vocational skills are developed to a high standard. Consequently, a high proportion of learners successfully progress into employment.
- Teachers plan lessons well and make good links between theory and learners' practical work. Most teachers in lessons effectively assess learners' understanding. For example, they use well-directed questions and quizzes to test knowledge and understanding. However, they do not consistently challenge learners' responses to help them develop their learning further. Teachers use good examples from the workplace to help learners develop an understanding of work practices. However, in a small minority of lessons, teachers do not plan and ensure that the most able learners are sufficiently challenged to make more rapid progress.
- Teachers have high aspirations for their learners and use a variety of interesting activities to challenge and motivate them. Teachers encourage learners to become confident in talking about their work experiences and linking their learning to the workplace. Consequently, learners enjoy their learning and make good progress towards achieving their qualifications. Teachers accurately monitor learners' progress and effectively support learners who fall behind with their work. Most teachers set challenging and realistic targets for their learners, including targets to improve learners' personal development and work-related skills so that learners are clear about what they need to achieve next in order to make good progress. In a small minority of cases, academic targets set for the

most able learners are not sufficiently challenging to help them make more rapid progress.

- Excellent workshop accommodation and resources, available across all curriculum areas, support teaching and learning well. These provide plentiful opportunities to help learners develop industrial techniques and gain expertise. Teachers take care to keep up to date with industry standards and changes, and are able to enhance learners' work-related skills very effectively.
- Learners make good progress, given their starting points, in improving their English and mathematics skills. However, the proportion of learners who achieve A* to C grades in GCSE English and, particularly, mathematics is too low. The achievement of functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics for apprentices is good. Senior managers have successfully introduced new strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics to help learners and apprentices make more rapid progress. Teachers are now challenging learners on GCSE courses to make more progress and improve their grades, resulting in the majority of current learners making good progress in improving their English and mathematics skills. Vocational teachers have become more skilled at reinforcing and linking English and mathematics within their subject areas and, consequently, learners become confident in using their skills in English and mathematics in a vocational context and can apply them in the workplace.
- Leaders and senior managers have successfully restructured apprenticeship programmes, introducing more robust tracking and monitoring of apprentices' progress. Assessment of apprentices is now better planned and more frequent. Teachers now swiftly identify apprentices who are not making sufficient progress and take actions to ensure that they get back on track. Although more apprentices completed their apprenticeship in the planned time in 2015/16, this is still too low. Apprentices develop good vocational skills that are valued by their employers. The majority of current apprentices are making good progress towards achieving their qualification in the planned time.
- Learners on study programmes benefit from a good range of purposeful external work experience, linked to their vocational courses, that develops their workplace skills effectively. Work experience is planned well, utilising effectively the large number of links with employers which have been successfully developed by managers to provide good-quality placements. Learners develop good work-related skills within their vocational courses. Teachers are skilled at helping learners develop an understanding of workplace practices. Opportunities for work experience within college, for those learners who are not sufficiently confident to undertake external work experience, are good. Learners are able to work in the college commercial facilities such as the farm and garden centre to develop their work skills in preparation for external work placements.
- Enrichment and additional learning activities are good and enable learners to develop both employability and personal skills, such as team-building and organisational skills. Activities such as marshalling and stewarding at organised events and fundraising activities help learners develop good communication and customer service skills. In horticulture, learners become involved with projects

based on sustainability and conservation, developing their wider understanding of the environment. Learners on floristry courses develop a good understanding of commercial environments by producing floral displays for sale in the college's commercial garden centre.

- Learners have a good understanding of the practical use of English and mathematics within their work. For example, learners on arboriculture courses applied their mathematics skills to ensure that the fuel ratio for use in chainsaws was correct and learners on animal care courses worked out the correct quantity of feed required by animals. Learners develop a good use of technical language, particularly in veterinary nursing courses.
- Learners attend their classes and arrive on time prepared for their learning. Learners' standards of behaviour are excellent.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the number of apprentices who achieve their qualifications and in the planned time increases
- learners studying GCSE English and mathematics make good progress and a greater proportion achieve grades A* to C
- teachers' planning for learning provides appropriate challenge for learners of all abilities, particularly the most able
- a higher proportion of learners on adult courses achieve their qualification.

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

Stephen Miller
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the short inspection, the team was assisted by the vice principal as nominee. We held meetings with you, your senior leaders, governors, managers, teaching staff, employers, partners and learners. With members of your staff we observed teaching, learning and assessment and looked at learners' work. We spoke with learners and employers. We reviewed key documents, including those relating to the college's strategy, self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of learners by reviewing the comments received on Ofsted's

online questionnaires, from your own learner survey and by seeking the views of learners during on-site inspection activity.