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Mrs Nicola Moxon
Principal
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Dear Mrs Moxon

Short inspection of Cambian Dilston College

Following the short inspection on 8 and 9 November 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 January 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

During a period of significant organisational and leadership change at the college, leaders and managers have continued to provide a good educational experience for learners. Governors know the college and understand its challenges, strengths and weaknesses. They support the leadership team well to shape plans for the future and to strengthen leadership capacity following the restructure of the college within the Cambian Group.

You and your leaders set high expectations for staff and learners. Many learners make notable gains in self-confidence and social interaction skills. Your staff share your strategy to provide high-quality provision that meets local employment needs and learners' personal ambitions. Developing learners' communication, confidence and social skills is a key focus of the college. Learners are motivated to learn, happy and keen to succeed. Leaders and managers have created a culture where all learners and staff show mutual respect and tolerance towards each other.

Leaders and managers have made good progress in addressing most of the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications has increased, and the achievement rate for learners who completed their programme in 2016/17 is high. Since the last inspection, you and your leaders have continued to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Your staff help learners to develop the personal and workplace skills that they need to progress successfully to supported employment or

a long-term work placement. You have made progress in improving the recording of learners' progress towards achieving their qualifications and their personal development targets. However, you recognise that the monitoring of learners' progress requires further development to enable leaders, managers and governors to increase the rate of improvement further. You have introduced an electronic monitoring system, and staff are beginning to make better use of this system to record learners' targets and progress. A small minority of staff have yet to exploit its full benefits to support all learners to develop their skills and knowledge.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective, and you take appropriate actions to safeguard learners. As a result, learners are safe while attending college and when participating in external activities.

Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. All staff have received enhanced checks on their suitability for employment through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), and managers record these in an up-to-date single central register. Managers review DBS checks every three years.

Leaders have implemented a comprehensive 'Prevent' duty action plan after conducting a full risk assessment. Staff receive regular updates on safeguarding issues, such as child protection, radicalisation and extremism, to ensure that they can spot early signs of concern. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding, and they know to whom they should report safeguarding issues if they arise. Managers have good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and other agencies, including the local authority, behavioural specialists and housing accommodation services. Leaders and staff make appropriate referrals when the need arises.

Managers and staff effectively support learners to consider their own safety and well-being. Teachers discuss the risks of radicalisation and extremism with learners. Most learners have an awareness of radicalisation and extremism and can explain the importance of keeping themselves safe on social media and when socialising or talking to strangers. Learners report that terrorism is 'a bad thing', and can recall how staff discuss topics with them, such as the attacks on New York in 2001. Learners demonstrate a good awareness of personal safety while travelling in the local community. They benefit from useful workshops run by external services that cover topics such as e-safety, sexual relationships and well-being.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors use the self-assessment process to evaluate accurately the progress that they make in key areas of the college's work. Governors challenge leaders well to improve performance in many areas of the college's work, such as the quality and use of resources, the quality of care, and the use of funding for specialist support. However, governors do not receive sufficiently clear or helpful reports on learners' progress and achievements. As a result, they

do not provide sufficient challenge to leaders to ensure that learners are developing their academic skills, including their English and mathematical skills, sufficiently.

- Leaders evaluate the quality of lessons effectively through lesson observations, and provide training for teachers to improve aspects of their practice. However, managers' feedback to learning support staff following observations and appraisals does not provide consistently clear and helpful training objectives to enhance further the effectiveness of support which, in a small minority of lessons, is not effective enough.
- Learners make good progress towards achieving their qualifications and their personal and social development targets. Most learners gain relevant work experience in the college. For example, learners serve customers and deal with money in the college café. A high proportion of learners complete external work placements with supportive employers in, for example, retail stores, supermarkets and charity shops, and with the National Trust. Learners develop independence skills effectively; they make decisions and understand that making mistakes is part of the learning process.
- Learners make good progress in developing their communication skills. This helps them to interact well with staff, peers and visitors. Learners improve their confidence and their ability to interact socially. For example, learners who lacked the confidence to go out independently now participate fully in community life.
- All learners in practical sessions benefit from realistic working environments, and they work to professional standards to accomplish tasks. In catering sessions, learners prepare the main course that is served at lunchtime in the college's canteen. In practical workshop sessions, learners develop woodwork and painting skills by renovating old furniture. Learners benefit from realistic work projects and, as a result, develop their employability skills well.
- Learners improve their mathematical skills effectively through stimulating learning activities and the effective use of personal targets. Teachers encourage learners to use estimating and multiplication skills to decide on the number of plates required for kitchen service. In craft sessions, learners discuss how different shapes, including three-dimensional objects, are used to form the piece they are producing.
- Learners develop their literacy skills well through teachers' reinforcement of technical language. They benefit from useful glossaries of terms, which help them to recap previous learning topics. For example, in pottery sessions, learners demonstrate good knowledge of why air holes are required in clay to prevent it from exploding in the kiln.
- Teachers reinforce learners' information and communication technology skills very effectively in lessons. Learners demonstrate good technology skills and confidently use assistive technology and interactive whiteboards to complete tasks such as mapping images to sentences.
- Staff assess learners' skills in English and mathematics effectively at the start of their programme. They use this information well to enrol learners onto an appropriate level of programme and to set personal targets to develop learners'

skills. Many learners achieve their English and mathematics personal targets. However, a small proportion of learners who transferred to the college from a regional network group are making less than expected progress towards achieving their functional skills qualifications. This is because leaders have not received accurate information about these learners' starting points. Staff have reassessed learners' starting points and are working hard to develop learners' initial confidence in English and mathematics and ensure that learners are studying at an appropriate level.

- Teachers and support staff effectively use information about learners' abilities at the start of their programme to provide well-matched support and programmes of study that enable learners to settle into college quickly. Teachers ensure that learning is stimulating and is focused on improving learners' independent living and work skills. Consequently, a high proportion of learners achieve their personal goals and have a greater awareness of how to care for themselves.
- Support in relation to career ambitions and job options is good. It provides learners with useful opportunities to test out their vocational learning at other providers or trial job roles with supportive employers. On completion of their programmes, a high proportion of learners move into employment or study vocational courses at a higher level at other colleges.
- In most cases, teachers' management of learning support is effective and helps to maximise the progress that learners make in lessons. Learners benefit from a good range of symbolised resources to aid understanding. Speech and language therapists make good contributions to the learning experience. Occupational therapists and learning support staff work well with learners to improve their mobility and coordination. Behaviour management strategies are effective, and any incidents are diffused quickly and efficiently.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- reporting of the progress and skills that learners develop is clear and helpful, and enables governors to challenge leaders to increase the rate of improvement further
- leaders and managers use performance data effectively to analyse and monitor all aspects of learners' progress, particularly performance in accredited learning
- all staff and managers use the new system for monitoring learners' progress effectively to ensure that learners achieve to their full potential
- they enhance further the skills of learning support staff through helpful staff development following lesson observations.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracey Mace-Akroyd
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors were assisted by the head of education, as nominee. We met with you, governors, leaders, teachers, learning support staff and learners. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment, and internal work placements. We reviewed key documents, including those in which leaders evaluate the quality of provision and standards of learning, and the college's evidence of safeguarding.