

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



26 April 2017

Mr Steve Frampton, MBE
Principal
Portsmouth College
Tangier Road
Portsmouth
Hampshire
PO3 6PZ

Dear Mr Frampton

Short inspection of Portsmouth College

Following the short inspection on 30 and 31 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 March 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

With governors and managers, you have ensured that students continue to receive a good-quality education. The college has grown substantially since the previous inspection. Enterprising and innovative changes to the timetable have helped to focus students on learning and are improving attendance. A substantial investment in technology allows all students to use hand-held tablet computers to good effect in and out of the classroom and has enhanced independent learning.

Leaders and managers have successfully embedded a culture of high expectations for staff and students which has led to improvements in students' progress and outcomes, and you recognise that you need to develop these further. You provide good guidance, support and care for students. Students benefit from attending the college, flourish, and become more confident, articulate and purposeful.

You and your senior managers have embraced the importance of work-related learning by developing the 'E5' programme, which gives students the skills they need to progress to further education, employment or an apprenticeship. You recognise that more students, particularly those studying at level 2, would benefit from external work placement opportunities. Managers have successfully expanded and improved the apprenticeship programme, developing strong links with employers and catering well for local needs. Learners following these courses value the opportunities that their programmes give them, and are successful.

You, the governors and staff have successfully implemented the requirements of

study programmes. A number of aspects of the programmes are strong, such as the high proportion of students who gain grades at A* to C in GCSE English and mathematics and the good progress that students make on AS-level courses. You understand why a small number of students on level 3 programmes do not achieve their full potential. Initially, leaders were slow to react to the decline in achievement in 2014/15, but you have now put in place actions which are having a positive impact.

Students continue to experience good teaching and effective and informative assessment of their work, which result in successful learning taking place in nearly all lessons. Students enjoy their studies and, as a result, most make good progress and achieve their qualifications.

Inspectors and your observers jointly observed and assessed the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They agreed that the large majority of teachers challenge students effectively by using good classroom management skills and questioning and effective activities for learning. Teachers have high expectations of their students and motivate them well, managing group work effectively. They ensure that most students are clear about how to improve their work.

Governors provide effective support and challenge to your leadership team. They have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement throughout the college. Governors use their skills well to monitor students' progress and support the introduction of new initiatives, such as the move to a new timetable.

You, your leaders and staff have made good progress in dealing with the areas for development at your previous inspection. Teachers now routinely set more challenging activities for most students and this has resulted in improved progress, particularly for those studying at AS level. You are very aware of the minority of subjects that need further improvement and actions to support these areas are having a positive, albeit slow, impact.

You have made good progress in linking the management of teachers' performance to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You use the results from your teaching and learning observation process to deliver an effective programme of staff development. This has improved classroom performance, focusing effectively, for example, on behaviour management.

Leaders have been slow to develop students' understanding of equality and their awareness of diversity in their society through teaching and learning. Too few teachers take opportunities to deepen students' understanding of these areas, and managers do not yet monitor closely enough the development of this important aspect of teaching and learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, managers and governors have ensured that action is taken to protect learners. Students feel safe and they know how to keep themselves safe. Staff and

governors have received the appropriate training in safeguarding, know their responsibilities and act upon them. Students' behaviour around the college and in lessons is good.

College managers have ensured that the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty are met. Students have a thorough understanding of how to protect themselves from the dangers posed by extremism and are aware of the risks from those who may try to radicalise them. The work that leaders and managers have done to focus learning about these topics on current and local concerns has engendered a broader interest in these sensitive areas and developed students' understanding of what it means to be a citizen in the modern world. Students have a genuine interest in discussing and debating these matters and they do so with enthusiasm.

Inspection findings

- Governors, leaders and managers know the college very well. They make good use of data and a new student tracking and monitoring system helps them to quickly identify poor performance. As a result, they accurately identify weaknesses and support and challenge staff to bring about improvement. This has been successful in most cases but you acknowledge that a small number of subject areas have yet to improve sufficiently. You are now making these a priority for improvement.
- The large majority of teachers provide students with a good level of challenge during lessons. Students talk confidently about their personal targets and are able to articulate in detail what they need to do to improve their work. However, a small number of teachers do not challenge all students, and particularly the most able, effectively enough. As a result of this, a small minority of students do not progress as well as they could.
- Managers analyse and report on most achievement and progress gaps and communicate this information to governors. However, managers do not always emphasise the importance of the data or put in place robust actions to close these gaps. For example, there are no specific actions in place to ensure that students who are entitled to free school meals and students with a high attainment on entry make the progress they should.
- Students receive good advice and guidance that ensure they enrol on study programmes that match their starting points, meet their ambitions very well, and provide clear pathways that support their career aspirations. Students talk positively about the help and support they get with their next steps after college.
- Students develop excellent work-related skills through an effective programme of activities which focus on developing enterprise and entrepreneurship skills. Most level 3 students take up external work experience placements. However, managers need to ensure that more of the small proportion of students on level 2 programmes have similar opportunities for meaningful work placements so they can develop the skills that they need for future employment.
- Students who have not yet gained grade C or above in GCSE English and mathematics follow appropriate programmes. Teachers support them and help

them to develop the specific skills they require to achieve their qualifications and be successful in their vocational or academic studies. More students are successful in these qualifications than in other similar colleges. Students who have already gained these qualifications have good opportunities to further develop their skills in these subjects.

- Students treat each other, and staff, courteously, and interact with each other well. The inclusive nature of the college helps students to understand the principles of equality and diversity in practice. The strong focus that leaders, managers and staff have put on mutual respect, dignity and tolerance ensures that students understand and embrace this. Nevertheless, leaders must ensure that more teachers use opportunities within the curriculum to promote understanding of equality and awareness of diversity so that students can widen and deepen their understanding of these areas.
- Managers monitor the quality of apprenticeship provision carefully, and are clear about strengths and areas for improvement. They react quickly to concerns about the quality of provision and continue to support learners who have not achieved in a timely fashion to help them achieve their qualifications. Managers have strengthened their quality assurance procedures to further develop the checking of apprentices' progress, and to improve employer engagement. Managers monitor the quality of subcontracted provision effectively.
- Apprentices receive good support from staff, which they value highly. They are able to talk confidently about the skills that they are learning, and they value the practical experience and the depth of knowledge that they gain from their apprenticeships.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that performance management is effective in supporting teachers to improve their practice. Managers use evidence from a good range of sources to plan and implement highly effective staff training that has a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Students' attendance at lessons has improved this year and is now good, and currently just above the college's target. Governors and managers have prioritised attendance as a key area for improvement and monitor this well. Attendance at GCSE mathematics lessons is low and below the college target but is improving as a result of actions that you have already taken.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers are supported to improve their practice in those subjects where teaching, learning and assessment are not yet reliably good
- managers continue to develop relevant work experience opportunities, particularly for the small minority of level 2 students who will not progress to further study at the college
- managers and teachers further improve students' understanding of equality and awareness of diversity by ensuring that all opportunities are taken to discuss

these important topics in curriculum lessons

- when managers identify gaps in student achievement or progress, they put effective and robust actions in place and monitor these actions frequently to ensure that they have rapid impact.

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

Andy Fitt
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors were assisted by the vice-principal curriculum, quality and student voice, as nominee. We met with senior managers, members of the governing body, managers, teachers, students and apprentices. We reviewed assessed work and tracking systems and observed teaching, learning and assessment, accompanied by members of the senior team. We also considered the views of students through Ofsted's online questionnaire and face-to-face interviews. We reviewed key college documents, including those related to self-assessment, quality assurance, performance monitoring and safeguarding.