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Mrs Frances Wadsworth  
Chief Executive  
Croydon College  
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Dear Mrs Wadsworth

### **Short inspection of Croydon College**

Following the short inspection on 16–17 January 2018, 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 May 2014.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

You, your managers and staff continue to work effectively to improve the lives and life chances of students. Together, you have taken effective action to maintain the strengths and improve or eradicate most areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection.

The very strong partnership arrangements between the college, employers, the local authority and community leaders benefit students by contributing to the richness of their learning. The extensive volunteering opportunities, well-planned work experience, supported internships and workplace mentoring that partners provide prepare students well for work and their next steps into further training and/or higher education.

Leaders and managers provide a broad range of vocational learning programmes in most subject areas, and apprenticeship provision in health and social care, engineering, construction and business. The proportion of students who remain at college and move onto higher-level qualifications is high. Students' behaviour in lessons, workshops and around the college is exemplary. Students' attendance and punctuality in lessons have improved, although managers have set targets for further improvement. Most students on level 3 programmes now achieve their qualification.

The academic and vocational curriculum for students in the care of the local

authority, including unaccompanied children seeking asylum, is good. Students benefit greatly from the extra help and care they receive from staff at college.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory guidance for students aged 14 and above. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and implemented effectively to ensure that action taken safeguards students. A strong culture of vigilance and personal accountability for safeguarding permeates all aspects of studying and working at Croydon College. Through the college-wide, UNICEF-approved citizenship programme, new students understand rapidly the high standards of mutual respect and behaviour expected by the college community, and they model these values well.

Managers' monitoring of safeguarding arrangements is detailed and exceptionally thorough. Good-quality training enables staff to be well informed and respond appropriately to any issues that students may raise with them. Teachers are confident to debate sensitive topics with students, for example the rise in violent crime in London, and the reasons why carrying a personal weapon is not a suitable approach to keeping yourself safe.

Senior leaders work diligently with the local authority, the police and community partners to identify the wide-ranging potential threats that affect the lives of students. This results in managers' well-planned and effective response to ensuring that students are safe, and that they know how to keep themselves safe when travelling, working and studying.

Students have a good understanding of how to work safely in workshops and classrooms. For example, during a practical lesson in an electrical installation workshop, the student designated as the lesson 'site supervisor' confidently and courteously briefed the inspector and observer about the safety considerations for the workshop space and what actions they should take in the event of an emergency.

### **Inspection findings**

- Students benefit from high-quality careers advice and guidance throughout their time at college. Information and guidance from employers are central to managers' approach. For example, they have a well-established programme of visiting speakers and employers who provide a powerful insight into how to be successful at work, and also useful tips and hints about how to improve a student's career prospects. A high proportion of students have part-time work and college staff work well with local employers to seek out and promote available employment. Staff analyse effectively each student's starting point when they first apply to join the college. They use this information well with students so that they choose the most appropriate programme to develop the skills and knowledge they will need to pursue their chosen career. Teachers benefit from regular vocational skills updating with employers, and they use this

well to shape students' expectations of the world of work and the skills and knowledge they will need.

- Governors play a positive role in supporting leaders and managers, in particular with regard to a focus for students on business and employment. Leaders use business advisers to good effect to counsel them on the development of the curriculum, and staff use the college's business links well to provide job-related opportunities for students. These include airside experience at a major airport and developing digital skills through placements with a large high street retailer. Governors and leaders are keenly aware and make good use of local business developments, such as in retail, residential development and the demand for higher-level digital skills, and they develop courses and training in response.
- Following their evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, managers have focused on supporting staff to improve the quality of teachers' feedback to students on marked work, and to provide appropriately demanding assessment for most-able students. To date, the actions they have taken have had a partial impact. Many staff recognise the importance of providing work that is more difficult for the most able students, checking closely the development of students' skills and knowledge and providing well-timed, detailed feedback. In some areas, for example health and social care and English, inspectors saw teachers use a range of effective strategies to check learning and make sure that students know how to improve. However, in a minority of lessons seen, teachers were less skilled in checking or developing learning. For example, they did not help students to probe deeper into topics taught or extend their learning further.
- Leaders and managers have a well-conceived strategy to improve the English skills of students. They recognise that many students entering college lack the fundamental skills in English required for success in learning and everyday life. Managers have placed, at the heart of the strategy, encouraging students to read for pleasure and reinforcing reading as a skill required for all subjects learned. A high proportion of students now read for pleasure. Managers have focused closely on ensuring that staff are appropriately trained and qualified to implement managers' plans for improvement. Teachers create suitable plans for developing students' English skills in lessons, but are not consistently adept at implementing these in lessons. As a result, too few vocational teachers are currently integrating English effectively into lessons and workshops.
- Leaders and managers have worked effectively to ensure that the proportion of students who achieve their qualification has improved in the three years since the previous inspection. A high proportion of adult students achieve their qualification. Students in the care of the local authority and those receiving free school meals and/or financial assistance achieve particularly well. In 2016/17, many more students achieved their qualifications although the proportion of students on 16 to 19 study programmes at levels 1 and 2 who achieve their qualification is not yet good.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a larger proportion of students on 16 to 19 study programmes achieve their qualification; managers and teachers need to monitor students' progress closely and intervene quickly when students are at risk of not completing
- teachers develop students' English skills effectively in vocational lessons, and encourage students to read both for pleasure and to improve their vocational subject knowledge
- a high proportion of students achieve high grades in their studies as a result of teachers providing students with demanding and stimulating teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Jules Steele  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors, supported by the deputy chief executive, carried out the inspection at short notice. We observed learning across a broad range of vocational subjects including science and engineering, access to higher education, English and mathematics. We interviewed students, teachers, staff, managers, governors and partners. We viewed key documents including managers' most recent self-assessment of performance and quality improvement plans, students' achievement data and documents related to safeguarding students.