

<b>28 January 2014</b>		<b>ITEM : 5</b>
<b>Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Palmer's College Ofsted Action Plan</b>		
<b>Report of:</b> Michael Peters – Strategic Lead, School Improvement, Learning & Skills, Michele Lucas – Learning & Skills Manager and Ruth Brock – School Improvement Manager.		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-Key	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Michael Peters, Strategic Lead, School Improvement, Learning & Skills		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services		
<b>This report is</b> Public		
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> to provide an update following the Ofsted inspection of Palmer's College.		

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Palmer's Sixth Form College provides 16-19 education for a significant number of young people in Thurrock. The college has over 2000 students on roll. It was inspected by Ofsted during the Autumn Term 2013. The report provided a detailed series of judgements on the quality of education provision at the college. Overall judgement was that the college was 'Requiring Improvement'. This report outlines the key judgements made by Ofsted and sets out a summary of the college Improvement Plan. The report also notes the partnerships with the college and areas that the local authority might work with the college to support improvements.

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

#### **1.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the actions and support for Palmer's College.**

### **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**

2.1 Palmer's College is a 16-19 sixth form college funded by the Education Funding Agency. The College is the designated Sixth Form College for 16-19 year olds in Thurrock. There are over 2000 students on roll from Thurrock, Basildon, Brentwood, Billericay, Hornchurch, Rainham, Wickford and East London. Whilst there is a growing number of other post 16 providers, Palmer's College remains the single largest provider of sixth form education within Thurrock.

2.2 The 2013 A-level pass rate was 97.4%, following the highest level of 97.8% in 2012. 16 subjects gained a 100% pass rate including English, Physics, Law and Further Mathematics and 63% of students gained A\*-C grades (70% in 2012) with the level 3 BTEC Extended Project gaining a pass rate of 97%.

2.3 The College was inspected by Ofsted between 15 and 18 October 2013. The report was published in November 2013. The result overall of the inspection was the college 'Requires Improvement'. At its previous inspection in 2007 the college was graded 'Outstanding'. The College was graded as 'Requiring Improvement' this time because:

- The proportion of students who achieve their qualification is around the national rate but too much variation exists between different subjects and different groups of students. On AS-level and advanced vocational courses, not enough students pass their courses.
- While students make good progress on many vocational courses, those studying academic courses do not make enough progress and too few are achieving high grades.
- Standards of teaching, learning and assessment vary too much and not enough is consistently good or better.
- College processes to improve the quality of teaching and learning through the performance management of teachers are insufficiently robust and as a result, have been ineffective.
- Not all students are developing their use of English and mathematics, as well as they could do.
- Leaders and managers have not maintained the college's previously outstanding standards and actions taken to improve have met with mixed success. While the pace of change has increased notably over the past year, and positive signs of improvement are emerging, it is too early to assess the impact of many initiatives.
- The governing body has not questioned senior leaders sufficiently about the reasons for the overall decline in the college's educational performance in the past few years.

Ofsted reported a number of key strengths in the college including:

- A high and improving proportion of students on A-level and intermediate level programmes achieve their qualifications.
- Students gain a good range of personal and social skills that prepare them well for future employment or their next steps in education.
- Students enjoy college and their behaviour throughout all areas of the college is very good.
- Support for students who require additional help in their studies is good and they achieve well.
- A good range of additional trips and activities enrich students' experience and raise aspirations.
- The college's well-maintained accommodation provides a positive place for students to learn.

- 2.4 Given the importance of the performance of Palmer's College to educational achievement and aspirations for young people in Thurrock close working with the College is an essential component of work in the borough. This relationship is maintained throughout the Council but especially by the learning and skills team.
- 2.5 The College actively engages with Thurrock wide work through the 11-19 Strategy and delivery groups and with the Borough's economic development activity.
- 2.6 As at the time of drafting this report officers are in the process of meeting with College leaders to consider aspects of the College action plan to support rapid improvement in its journey back towards outstanding.
- 2.7 The key area of development of the College that the Local Authority is signalling its support is for governance to provide challenge and support to improve:
- Progress and achievement on Advanced Vocational Courses, academic courses and use of English and mathematics.
  - The consistency of high quality teaching, learning and assessment and performance management.
- 2.8 An update on this will be provided at the meeting.

### **3. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 3.1 Discussions are being held with the Principal

### **4. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

- 4.1 This report relates to the council priority to improve the education and skills of local people.

### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

#### **5.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**  
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There are no financial implications to this report.

#### **5.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**  
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The contents of this report are for noting only.

### 5.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**  
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There are areas of significant disadvantage within the borough and the proportion of families that have experience of further or higher education in Thurrock is lower than comparable areas in the country. Whilst improving, the qualification levels of Thurrock residents lag behind those found nationally both at level 2 and level 3. Improving the educational achievements for young people aged 16-19 is a key priority for Thurrock, particularly for the most disadvantaged young people. The student population at Palmer's College has a high proportion of those from disadvantaged households. Also the proportion of students from ethnic minority groups is significantly above the Thurrock average. Improving educational attainment of students from the College will have a positive impact for equalities in Thurrock.

## 6. **RISKS**

Palmer's College is a separate incorporated body with separate lines of formal accountability. Any support and challenge provided must be with the express agreement of the College Corporation and senior leadership.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:**

- Ofsted inspection Report – Palmer' College – November 2013

### **APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:**

- Appendix 1 – Palmer's College Improvement Plan

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## Appendix 1

### Palmer's College Improvement Plan



#### **WHAT DOES THE PROVIDER NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

<b>Improvement point</b>	<b>Actions to date</b>
<p>Improve the quality of teaching and learning so it is consistently good or better and so that all students make at least good progress in lessons. Ensure all teachers use initial assessment information to plan and implement activities that are interesting and challenging for all students. Additionally, ensure teachers routinely reinforce and develop students' mathematical and English skills and use questioning more effectively to extend and deepen students' knowledge and skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 27 twilight CPD activities have been held which were well attended, with positive feedback.</li><li>• The previously planned CPD day, focusing on 'Narrowing the Gap' based on active learning strategies, was held on 19/11.</li><li>• 'The Way Forward' – issue 1.</li><li>• How2 was introduced to Heads of Faculty, Learning Mentors and then to the Science and Maths staff, plus one of the members of staff who are currently on Capability.</li><li>• Cross-College Maths &amp; Literacy group - the existing Literacy group has been extended to include Maths. A staff survey of skills will be carried out in January to identify support and CPD required.</li></ul>
<p>Ensure all teachers set sufficiently ambitious targets for students and monitor the progress towards these closely and frequently. Support all groups of students, particularly those on academic courses and White British male students, to achieve their qualifications successfully and make good or better progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All students have now been given aspirational targets and these have been included in their Progress Update reports.</li><li>• CPD training and focus groups have been held within AS Psychology and the CM is adapting materials. This will be extended to Sociology then the findings will be rolled out across the College.</li></ul>

<p>With immediate effect, ensure managers improve the teaching, learning and assessment in science to reverse the notable decline in student outcomes to ensure students across all Science courses are achieving well and making good progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health &amp; Safety – the profile of H &amp; S has been raised across the department. Two H &amp; S training sessions have been held and a new policy issued to staff. In recent observations by an HMI of all Science staff, no H &amp; S issues were identified.</li> <li>• To support the Science staff a recent HMI has been in to observe every member of the Science Department. Feedback was given so that every member of staff knows what to take forward and why.</li> <li>• Sue Davis and Derrick Griffiths met with the Head of Faculty following the visit to discuss the report and agree a way forward.</li> <li>• Every member of the Science Department has identified areas for improvement based on the feedback.</li> <li>• The Head of Faculty has increased the frequency of departmental meetings.</li> <li>• The HMI was asked if he thought that the Science staff were capable of making the required improvements and he was certain that every member of staff was energised and capable to turn the faculty around.</li> </ul>
<p>Simplify, strengthen and implement robust performance management arrangements at all levels, in order to increase accountability and drive improvement. Ensure managers and staff are set clear, specific and measurable targets that rapidly improve the areas for which they are responsible. Monitor performance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heads of Faculty and SMT have been set more focused targets in their professional reviews – with the clear aim of improving teaching and learning.</li> <li>• Heads of Faculty and Human Resources have reviewed the two members of staff currently on Capability to ensure the action plans are more robust.</li> <li>• There is more rigorous focus on key</li> </ul>

<p>against these targets frequently and hold managers and staff to account for underperformance.</p>	<p>performance indicators with Heads of Faculty on a fortnightly basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A group has been established, comprising the Mark Vinall, Sue Davis, Derrick Griffiths, Alison Ross and Helen Aaron, Director of HR, to integrate the College's procedures into an over-arching approach to performance management which is fit for purpose for the College. The first meeting will be held in January.</li> <li>• Senior managers have increased the frequency of monitoring and recording of their management of staff.</li> </ul>
<p>Strengthen the college's teaching and learning observation process to ensure managers have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. Make sure all observers focus sharply on learning and progress when forming judgements and when drawing up subsequent action plans for teachers. Additionally, clarify links between lesson observations, annual appraisal, staff training and the college's core and curriculum reviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two recent HMIs will be in College during the first week in January to offer lesson observation and moderation training to Heads of Faculty, SMT and other key staff. This will be week-long training involving shared observations and moderation of observations. Staff have been very forthcoming in volunteering to be observed.</li> <li>• The Principal gave a presentation on lesson observation in a Staff Briefing on 10/11.</li> <li>• 'The Way Forward' – issue two.</li> <li>• We are developing 'walk-through' observations. Media and Humanities have already started.</li> </ul>
<p>Improve the governing body's scrutiny of academic performance. Ensure governors review more closely the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, the impact of management actions and key trends in students' outcomes over time. Provide governors with reports that focus on key indicators of success, such as student-related progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum &amp; Standards Committee has changed the recording of meetings to reflect the details which were previously omitted.</li> <li>• Governors have identified the need for training, particularly for members of the Curriculum &amp; Standards Committee.</li> <li>• An additional Corporation meeting was held on 9/12 to discuss the Ofsted report and an external HMI sat in on</li> </ul>

<p>measures, so they may ask more probing questions of senior leaders and hold them better to account.</p>	<p>the meeting to observe and advise Corporation members. He has worked with the Principal to design a bespoke training programme for governors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the Science faculty will be invited to Corporation meetings to give a presentation on progress.</li> <li>• The practice of inviting all Heads of Faculty to the January Curriculum &amp; Standards Committee meeting to report to governors will continue.</li> </ul>
<p>Improve the effectiveness of quality assurance and self-assessment to speed up the rate of improvement. Targets in action plans should be clearly priorities, measureable and focus more closely on the impact for students. Managers must scrutinise the effectiveness of these plans carefully and frequently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings have been arranged for each Head of Faculty with SMT to discuss their faculty QIPs.</li> <li>• Derrick Griffiths, Sue Davis &amp; Alison Ross will meet fortnightly to update the College QIP by recording progress made.</li> </ul>

13 December 2013

Sources of reference:

SAR

QIP

Corporation minutes

Staff Link

Staff Briefings

'The Way Forward'