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## Outstanding leadership and management: Queen Mary's College

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### Brief description

This example shows how the good implementation of a clearly defined mission and a culture focuses successfully on the views of learners and support for their progress and achievement.

### Overview – the provider's message

'We wanted to ensure that our commitment to recruiting learners with a broad range of prior attainment and to serving the local community were successful. Our mission statement, "To build a learning community in Basingstoke and its region" makes this clear and the college plays a central role in the community, and in supporting the aspirations of residents. The journey has been a steady, consistent process of reinforcing the implications of the mission in terms of day-to-day behaviour. At each stage of development, we have had to evaluate how effectively the message is embedded. Working it through with people is what matters. Staff have come to understand what our mission means in practice and implement it by encouraging and supporting students. The result has been significant improvements in our success rates.



My advice to others? Work the mission through in every area, so that staff understand how the mission relates to the individual, and encourages students to achieve.'

*Ali Foss, Assistant Principal*

### The good practice in detail

What makes leadership and management outstanding? At Queen Mary's College, inspectors judged that leaders and managers have developed very successfully a mission and culture that places the college at the heart of its community. The [report](#) says that, 'The principal and senior managers of the college provide outstanding strategic leadership and management. The college's mission to build a learning community in Basingstoke and its commitment to attracting students from a wide ability range and background inform every aspect of the corporate decision making process'. As Stephen Sheedy, the Principal says, 'It is important to have a very clear sense of what you are trying to achieve and why, with a strongly united approach from the management team'.

## Focusing on students' achievement of their potential

From the outset, the college is clear about its approach. The website says: 'We welcome young people of all levels of ability, with all kinds of talents, backgrounds, interests and ambitions; whatever your achievements so far and your hope for the future, you are welcome at Queen Mary's College. There is only one vital entry condition: all students must wish to continue their studies and be prepared to work, to join in, and to learn. Queen Mary's is a community of, and for, people who want to learn.'

A key step forward in the focus on helping students to succeed was the development of guiding principles for staff. These state that 'any students who leaves without fulfilling their potential is a failure for the college,' and include the [process](#) for supporting students, expectations about behaviour and how underperformance will be addressed.

## Managing retention

Retention has improved significantly by ensuring a whole-college proactive approach that enables quick interventions. The development of the college's information learning technology 'VISTA' system has provided a comprehensive tool for monitoring and tracking students' progress and performance. It links to the electronic mark book that is used by all teaching staff.

The VISTA system is used to monitor students by class and course; including their attendance; punctuality; submissions of work; exam assessments; reviews; references; whether they are working at the expected level; and their progress with UCAS. Students have access and can, for example, view their progress page or marks in modules. Reports every half term provide a clear picture of students' targets and progress, and whether they are working at their expected grades in each subject. Parents also have access to the information about their children's progress.

Staff are able to access a wide range of student performance information from VISTA. They can monitor how well individual students and classes are progressing and make timely interventions to deal with issues at an early stage. Subject teachers are able to promptly indicate concerns about students who are at risk of failing or underachieving. Peter Broom, assistant principal, says, 'VISTA has been very good for quality improvement. We have put enormous effort into weaker areas to make improvements through tracking, monitoring and supporting students. The system enables us to monitor performance by different groups of students and is very useful for the self-assessment process. As a manager, the last thing you want is surprises and the system puts you in the position to see what's happening throughout the year.'

## Learner voice

A strong student-centred ethos ensures that the college listens well and responds to the students. One student says, 'Staff are genuinely interested in our views'. As well as student governors, questionnaires and focus groups are used to seek students' views, as part the college's internal review and self-assessment process. Students are also involved in the evaluation and further development of safeguarding practices. A student panel is an integral part of the governors' planning weekend.

## Governance

Inspectors also judged governance of the college to be outstanding and identified that governors bring a high level and range of expertise to their role, which is used well by the college. Governors represent the community and local industry. The governing body has developed a very good understanding of the college's mission and role; they scrutinise and monitor all aspects of the college's work rigorously. They also work very effectively together to achieve successful outcomes.



Governors and senior managers have a shared belief that the physical environment of the college shows learners how much they are valued and many improvements have been made to the buildings recently including the new science centre.

## Provider background



[Queen Mary's College](#) is a large sixth form college in Basingstoke, Hampshire. Learners come from Basingstoke and the surrounding areas. The college provides courses in 11 of the 15 subject areas at all levels from pre-entry to advanced level, including provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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