

Brooke House Sixth Form College (BSix)

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	133608
Name of lead inspector:	Rebecca Jennings HMI
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Type of provider:	Sixth-form college
Address:	Kenninghall Road London E5 8BP

Interim visit

Context and focus of visit

On 17 March 2020, all routine inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As part of our phased return to routine inspections, we are carrying out 'interim visits' to further education and skills providers. Interim visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners and apprentices in this period, including learners with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. We intend to return to routine inspection in January 2021 but will keep the exact timing under review.

The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below and the findings are based on discussions with leaders, managers, staff and learners.

Information about the provider

Brooke House Sixth Form College (BSix) is a small sixth-form college in the London Borough of Hackney. Hackney is one of the most socially and economically deprived boroughs in the country and the unemployment rate is significantly above the rate for London and the United Kingdom. The proportion of students in Hackney who achieve five GCSEs at grade 4 and above, including English and mathematics, is similar to the remainder of London. A high proportion of students who study at BSix do so without a grade 4 or above in English and/or mathematics.

The college provides vocational and academic 16 to 19 study programmes for around 1,150 students. Most students are aged 16 to 19, and study on programmes at level 3. The highest proportion of enrolments are in science, mathematics and humanities subjects. The college receives high-needs funding for 40 students, most of whom are on 16 to 19 study programmes, with a few studying at foundation level.

What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that responds to the reasonable needs of students and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances?

Leaders continue to offer a similar range of programmes as before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governors, leaders, staff and students were in agreement in telling inspectors that students at BSix benefit most from safely attending college in person. Students currently have a full timetable of lessons at college, and are able to join lessons online if they are not able to do so in person, such as when self-isolating.

At the start of the pandemic when schools and colleges closed, leaders implemented actions to enable all students to continue learning online. They explained that they trained staff how to teach online safely and successfully. Leaders and staff felt that an entirely online curriculum was not as effective as previous in-class lessons. In anticipation of

students missing vital knowledge, leaders put in place a series of catch-up sessions when the college reopened. For example, they set up an English 'hub' where students can get additional support from teachers. Leaders have put in place additional assessments of new students' knowledge this term to ensure that they are on the right programme.

Leaders say that a key challenge continues to be overcoming the loss of learning for students. They are checking the impact of this on students since the start of the pandemic. They say that this has particularly affected A-level students returning for their second year.

Leaders are preparing staff and students for any further local restrictions by holding trial closure days where students learn from home. They have updated their website and redesigned resources for students to access course information easily. Leaders and managers meet with leaders from other London-based sixth-form colleges to share ideas on how they might teach practical sessions online.

When students or staff are unable to attend the college, they join lessons virtually via live streaming. Managers have plans for trips to galleries and careers fairs to take place online. Careers leaders have arranged work experience placements where students can attend these placements online from home.

What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of students?

Leaders and staff use information from a survey issued to students at the start of September to identify students' mental, physical and emotional health support needs. Teachers say that they are sensitive to the well-being of students, and the impact this can have on their readiness to learn. Leaders and managers continue to offer a range of extra-curricular activities to students to raise morale and build students' confidence.

Leaders and managers monitor the quality of teaching through lesson visits which are reviewed at weekly team meetings. For this year, leaders continue to focus on staff training on effective online teaching. Staff spoke positively to inspectors about the training and support they receive to teach online. Managers say that they are taking a more creative approach when redesigning courses, with a focus on online learning strategies. For example, they use more interactive online activities and assessments in A-level mathematics to ensure that students fully understand concepts.

Teachers say that they assess students more than they previously did to identify gaps in knowledge. Teachers have adapted their teaching based on the knowledge gaps they have found. For example, in English for speakers of other languages, teachers focus on making up for the lack of practice students have had in speaking English while the college was closed.

In expectation of a possible future college closure, teachers make as much use now as they can of the resources they need to teach practical components of subjects. For example, in science teachers focus on teaching practical sessions.

How are leaders ensuring that students are safe and well informed about potential risks, including from online sources?

Leaders have updated the training they provide to staff and students to include information on how to conduct themselves safely online. Staff monitor online learning platforms to ensure that they are safe places for students to study.

Students learn about potential risks and how to stay safe at the start of their course, in assemblies and at tutorials. They know who to contact if they have any concerns about their well-being, and have access to further information through the college's online learning platform.

Leaders report an increased demand for well-being services from students. They have appointed specialist staff to identify and work with students who may need support with their mental health. Teachers told inspectors that they can report any concerns they have about students' safety through clear lines of communication. Leaders reported that they frequently talk to parents and external agencies, such as Hackney Learning Trust and other local authorities, to provide support for the most vulnerable students.

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