

Kirklees College

Interim visit report

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Type of provider: General further education college

Address: Manchester Road
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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

Kirklees College has seven sites in the metropolitan borough of Kirklees, with the two largest in Huddersfield and Dewsbury. The college provides study programmes, adult learning programmes and apprenticeships across a wide range of subjects. The college also delivers programmes for learners who have high needs. Around 3,740 learners aged 16 to 18 are on study programmes from entry level to level 3 and around 3,000 adults are on adult learning programmes from entry level to level 3. The college has 1,150 apprentices on programmes from level 2 to level 4. Around 520 learners have education and health care plans. The college uses five subcontractors. Subcontracted provision accounts for less than three percent of all learners.

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

Leaders consider that they were able to support staff quickly to adapt the curriculum to provide a balance of online and face-to-face delivery based on the needs of learners. The technology infrastructure and staff training for digital delivery that they had already put in place helped staff to continue to deliver the curriculum both during and after the lockdown period.

Curriculum leaders feel that senior leaders have supported and trusted them to adapt and plan the curriculum in ways that are appropriate for their subject areas and learners. Managers in engineering, for example, have sequenced the curriculum to maximise learners' access to practical training while the college is open, providing most theory training remotely. Leaders have the view that the move to providing more learning remotely has had benefits that they will build on. They believe that staff have produced innovative online lessons and learning activities. As a result, learners in some subjects, particularly at level 3, prefer remote learning. Leaders

explained that this has enabled them to maximise the now restricted physical college facilities to provide face-to-face teaching for the learners who they believe benefit from it the most. This includes learners with specific support needs and those who have not got the skills, space or facilities to study at home.

Leaders have engaged with local stakeholders to coordinate the local response to the pandemic. Subcontractors and employers have received communication from leaders about adapted arrangements for the delivery of the curriculum. Employers believe that adaptations that leaders have made, such as delivering practical training with apprentices using factory equipment, supported by tutors using video conferencing, have not slowed apprentices' progress.

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 learners?

Leaders and managers have continued to use their procedures for quality improvement and for monitoring learners' progress to evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the adapted curriculum. These procedures help leaders and managers to identify when staff require further support to deliver the curriculum, and where learners are struggling or are not engaged in learning. Managers and staff told us that the steps taken by leaders to prioritise training and support for both learners and teachers to improve their digital skills have helped learners to continue to build on their knowledge and skills. Staff are confident that learners have continued to receive careers advice and guidance through a blended approach of face-to-face and online sessions.

Teachers outlined the changes that they are making to the sequencing of the curriculum. They consider that these changes are appropriate to current circumstances and learners' needs. For example, in beauty therapy, learners are taught how to carry out facial treatments, as restrictions on these have been lifted at present. Staff responsible for apprenticeships have agreed alternative approaches with employers for identifying gaps in apprentices' knowledge and skills and actions to address them.

Leaders, managers and staff have identified cohorts and individual learners who may have barriers to learning remotely. They have taken actions which, in their view, ensure that learners continue to develop their knowledge and skills. Examples include providing laptops and mobile data dongles to learners and prioritising access to learning and resource centres for learners who struggle to work remotely.

Teachers consider that, in many cases, learners are more motivated this academic year. They explained that smaller group sizes allow learners to receive more attention and to concentrate better in lessons.

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

Leaders and managers have identified a range of additional safeguarding risks arising from COVID-19 that they have added to the existing safeguarding information for learners, their parents/carers and employers. In order to protect learners, they have adapted established ways of disseminating information and providing access to computers.

Staff are positive about the additional safeguarding training that leaders have provided, which has prepared them to protect learners as they return to face-to-face learning. The small number of learners with whom we spoke told us that they receive frequent input in lessons about how to stay safe, including when online, and receive regular safeguarding updates by email.

Staff and learners with whom we spoke know how to raise any concerns that they have about safeguarding issues, whether these arise on or off the college's premises.

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