

Macclesfield College

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	130621
Name of lead inspector:	Maura Cummins, HMI
Visit date(s):	21–22 October 2020
Type of provider:	General further education college
Address:	Park Lane Macclesfield Cheshire SK11 8LF

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

Macclesfield College is a medium-sized general further education college in the borough of Cheshire East. It serves the town of Macclesfield and the surrounding area. The college provides 16 to 19 study programmes in a wide range of vocational areas. It also provides adult learning, apprenticeship standards and apprenticeship frameworks. At the time of the visit there were 1,071 learners aged 16 to 18, 576 adults and 506 apprentices enrolled. Currently, there are 93 learners with an education, health and care plan.

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 adapted the curriculum and made plans to change delivery of courses in advance of COVID-19 restrictions. The teaching of practical units was prioritised. Curriculum plans were adapted and changed swiftly to respond to COVID-19 restrictions, sickness absences or the need for individuals to self-isolate. Leaders invested significantly in the college's information technology (IT) infrastructure to support online learning, which was implemented quickly following COVID-19 restrictions.

Leaders followed the guidance from an external advisor to ensure that the college site was adapted to comply with COVID-19 regulations and the safe return to face-to-face lessons. They provide regular updates to college staff, learners and stakeholders about COVID-19 risks.

Employers are satisfied with the support which the college's staff provided to their apprentices during COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders and managers worked closely with employers to ensure that gaps in apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours were identified, and actions put in place to help them catch up. For example, performing engineering operations apprentices now have an additional day per week to complete off-the-job training and help them catch up.

During the time when the college was closed, staff developed innovative online learning activities. For example, catering staff did live food preparation demonstrations which learners then replicated at home. As a group, learners presented their cooking online and the teacher facilitated a peer review of the quality of the food. Teachers used social media to engage learners when they were unable to attend college. For example, sports learners participated in the interview of the director of the local football academy to develop their understanding of potential careers.

Induction events for vulnerable learners and learners with high needs ensured a safe transition from school into college. Staff worked alongside parents and key workers to support learners and welcome them into their new environment. Virtual tours and open days helped all learners to understand what it is like to be a learner at the college, while allaying learners' and parents' fears.

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 say that online learning has been well-received by the majority of learners. Most young learners engaged in online learning but prefer lessons in college as they missed the social interaction with their peers. Adult learners commented that they prefer to learn online. A few adult courses, for example the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development qualification, will continue to be delivered online as learners say it fits in easier with their home and work commitments. All other courses for adults will combine online and face-to-face learning.

Teachers described how they now live-stream and record lessons to enable learners who are self-isolating to access learning from home. Teachers feel that the recordings of lessons is an invaluable resource to support their teaching.

Leaders have adapted their careers advice and guidance as an increasing number of companies and universities are recruiting staff and learners online during the pandemic. Learners and apprentices receive training on how to conduct themselves in an online interview. Online forums have enabled learners to access presentations from a greater number of guest speakers from industry and so extend their knowledge of possible progression routes. Career question and answer sessions have

been live-streamed so that learners can join in discussions with teachers and employers about local job opportunities.

Teachers have analysed learners' progress during COVID-19 restrictions. They have identified topics that learners have understood well, along with gaps and misconceptions. For example, in mathematics learners had grasped percentages, but many had struggled to understand how to draw pie charts and measure angles. Now that learners have returned to the classroom, teachers are focusing on improving learners' understanding of the topics they have struggled with.

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

Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, teachers conducted individual risk assessments of all learners and apprentices. Staff supported learners and apprentices through telephone calls, emails and home visits.

Staff and learners completed online safety modules covering topics such as online grooming, harassment and the appropriate use of the internet.

Paper-based learning packages were delivered to learners who were unable to access online learning activities. Teachers collected and assessed learners' work to ensure that they remained engaged and made progress during the COVID-19 restrictions. Free school meals were delivered to vulnerable learners and those in need. IT resources were loaned to learners who did not have access to digital technology.

Leaders told us that many learners' and apprentices' mental health and well-being was impacted negatively during the COVID-19 restrictions. The college's counsellor and pastoral teachers supported learners and apprentices who were struggling. For example, socially distanced football coaching was arranged to support learners who had poor mental health or were feeling socially isolated.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2020