

Loreto College

Interim visit report

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Type of provider: Sixth form college

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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 is based on discussions with leaders, managers, staff and students.

Information about the provider

Loreto College is a large, catholic college situated in Manchester. Students are enrolled mainly from the Greater Manchester area and Derbyshire. A higher-than-average proportion of disadvantaged students study A-level programmes at Loreto College.

The college has around 3,500 learners aged 16 to 18, of which the majority study A-level programmes across 31 subjects. Of the 3,500 learners, 265 study BTEC National Extended Diploma level 3 programmes across four subject areas. In addition the college offers a small BTEC National Diploma provision at level 2 and a pathways to independence programme at foundation level.

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?

Students attend the college unless they are self-isolating. Leaders described the challenges that some students have faced during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions, because of a lack of equipment or safe space to learn at home. Leaders overcame this by providing laptops to students and opening the college's study centre.

Staff explained how they supported new students in the transition to college by providing high schools with transition tasks. For example, in English literature students read a play and analysed key points. Students say that trialling subjects supported their choices. Leaders adapted the transition arrangements for students with high needs. Students had frequent individual discussions with staff, and external

agencies. They undertook personalised tours of the college and all students with high needs who had been offered places are successfully enrolled.

Leaders feel that there have been positive changes to the way they carry out induction and enrolment that will continue in the future. During enrolment, they provided students with greater accessibility to course and specialist advisers. This enabled students to have a more detailed conversation about their needs and career aspirations. Leaders believe that this has resulted in fewer course changes than in previous years.

Leaders state the biggest challenge is working effectively with a few external agencies to support students' additional needs. Leaders feel students are not always getting timely support. As a result, the college has put in place emergency funds for students and ensured that they are supported by college counsellors.

Leaders feel they benefit from sharing best practice and policies across the Loreto Education Trust. These include dealing with bereavement, safe opening of premises and weekly support from the college special educational needs coordinator. Governors state that they have joined a mental health hub to share expertise and experiences on how best to support staff.

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?

Teachers told us how they adapted the curriculum during the period that the college was only open to some students due to COVID-19 restrictions. For example, in drama, students studied Hedda Gabler online, with support from their teacher. This helped them to understand the content prior to returning to classroom-based learning where they are now performing the play. Teachers in health and social care took the decision not to deliver some units, such as end-of-life care, online. This was to ensure that teachers are available in person to support students who may be affected by the content.

Now that the college has reopened to all students, teachers have altered the provision for students with high needs to take account of the new skills they need due to the pandemic. For example, as students are no longer able to carry out travel training on public transport, teachers have substituted this activity with training on ordering food online from supermarkets.

Leaders told us that they have provided staff with training to enable them to utilise online learning resources and deliver lessons effectively. Leaders have partnered less-confident staff with those who are proficient in online delivery to support all staff to develop their skills.

Teachers are utilising online teaching to support students who are self-isolating. This is in a trial stage, with a growing number of teachers who say that it is working well. Students

say that they feel more involved in the lessons and are not disadvantaged by learning from home. Leaders plan to extend this trial to include all teachers in the coming weeks.

Leaders, teachers and students describe a diverse and inclusive atmosphere within the college. They say that students are glad to be back in college and are benefiting from learning and socialising with their peers.

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

Teachers promote online safety through additional sessions covering online identity theft, digital footprints and online meeting etiquette. They have altered the order of the topics they are now delivering to ensure students' safety. For example, the prevalence of county lines activity has increased, which has led to teachers discussing the topic early in the programme.

Staff are providing well-being support for students and their families. For example, during COVID-19 restrictions, families were supported through the food bank. Students in receipt of free school meals, including those who had completed their course in July 2020, continued to receive money to buy food throughout the summer. College counselling support is continuing for those students who are now on a gap year.

New students receive information on safeguarding and support services available before attending the college. Leaders explained how several students accessed support services before September, which enabled students to feel safe and settled.

Staff receive specific safeguarding training relating to their current context. For example, staff completed modules on criminal exploitation and mental health first aid.

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