

Hugh Baird College

Interim visit report

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Address: Balliol 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 in this period, including those 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

Hugh Baird College is situated in Bootle in the south of the borough of Sefton in Merseyside. The college has three sites throughout Merseyside. It provides education and training for around 4,200 learners and apprentices. The vast majority of learners attend the main college campus in Bootle, with provision for 14–16-year-old students through to adult learners. In November 2017, the college acquired South Sefton College and now offers a range of A-level courses at this site. A very small minority of learners with high needs attend Thornton College. The college provides courses from entry level to level 4 in a range of subjects. The largest subject areas are construction, building services, health and social care, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and basic skills. The provider does not work with any subcontractors.

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 have implemented varying models of teaching across the range of courses. Following a period of remote teaching, leaders assessed the engagement of learners on different levels and courses and moved to a mixed model of teaching. For example, leaders identified that learners studying English or mathematics had higher rates of attendance for face-to-face teaching compared with online lessons. They quickly changed to face-to-face teaching for all English and mathematics lessons to improve attendance rates. Leaders planned to increase the number of learners attending college on site, but due to COVID-19 restrictions in Merseyside, a few learners continue to access a mix of online and face-to-face lessons.

Leaders recognise the benefits of online teaching and will retain aspects such as live streaming of lessons in the future. Learners who are unable to access the college

site, such as those who are self-isolating, benefit from accessing lessons remotely. Apprentices have found the flexibility of online sessions useful, as they fit around their new work commitments and shift patterns. Employers and parents have praised the speed and flexibility at which leaders have implemented online learning.

Leaders feel that they have benefited from sharing good practice with other colleges in the local region. These include the safe opening of premises and online open events. Leaders say that attendance at open events has increased and they will continue to use online recruitment events in the future. The number of learners enrolled at the college increased in September 2020.

Leaders and managers have worked closely with employers to prioritise the skills and knowledge required for the workplace. Leaders worked with local NHS trusts to support delivery of the medicine management course. Learners completed and achieved their nursing qualification, providing the NHS trust with additional trained staff.

Senior leaders work with several stakeholders, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Careers Connect, local employers and Jobcentre Plus. They expanded the courses on offer to meet the changing skills needs of the local area and to support furloughed staff and learners not in employment, education or training. For example, leaders strengthened the college's traineeship offer, and provide customer service courses to support unemployed people to re-skill from hospitality to call-centre work.

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 catering, teachers delivered recipes and ingredients to learners to allow them to continue creating dishes when there was a shortage of flour in the shops.

Leaders and managers have adapted their quality assurance practices to monitor learners' engagement and to assess the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers feel that this has helped them improve their online delivery and to share good practice. For example, media staff demonstrated the effective use of virtual break-out rooms for learners to continue group work online.

Leaders and managers feel that learners can use technology and access online learning effectively. They lent out a large number of laptops and provided dongles to those who did not have access to technology and the internet at home. Managers say that this has provided flexibility and allows those who are self-isolating to continue with their studies. Learners who found online learning difficult were offered time in a quiet study area in the college where they could access technology and the internet safely.

Teachers have continued the assessment of learners' work, with some adaptations. For example, staff in the sixth form reduced the number of assessments during COVID-19 restrictions because of learners' varying circumstances and anxieties. Staff teaching learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities have used online chats and quizzes to assess new learners' confidence and communication skills. Managers believe that their approach to online assessment has improved learners' confidence. Teachers say that learners who do not normally contribute voluntarily in class are now participating more.

Teachers feel that online learning has increased learners' engagement, particularly where the teaching and resources have been innovative. For example, health and social care learners decorated a potato to demonstrate the six life stages from infant to adult. In English, teachers use videos and animations that learners can access from their phones.

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

Learners complete personal development modules on topics such as peer-on-peer abuse, radicalisation and online safety. Leaders adapted the content of topics to cover the risks most prevalent for their learners, such as the importance of not sharing images while online. Following these adaptations, the number of safeguarding referrals relating to online abuse has decreased.

Teachers use a variety of methods to raise learners' awareness of how to cope with anxiety, mental health and physical well-being. These have included guidance through the 'Hugh News' channel, and teachers contact learners weekly to carry out welfare checks. Learners identified as being at risk are given additional support through individual meetings with teachers and are allocated a mentor.

Teachers receive update training on safeguarding and health and safety with a particular focus on COVID-19 risks. In some subjects, such as health and social care, teachers worked with external agencies such as NHS Digital to understand the guidance for their specific sector to share with learners and apprentices.

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