

Moulton College

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	130772
Name of lead inspector:	Helen Whelan Her Majesty's Inspector
Visit date(s):	5–6 November 2020
Type of provider:	Specialist further education college
Address:	West Street Moulton Northamptonshire NN3 7RR

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.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, we made this visit remotely to reduce pressure on the provider.

Information about the provider

Moulton College is a specialist land-based college offering courses in a range of subject areas, including animal management, agriculture, equine studies, sport and construction. The college has recently started to offer courses in food and drink manufacturing.

At the time of the visit, the college had 1,704 learners aged 16 to 18, 170 adult learners and received funding for 119 learners with high needs. Most learners were enrolled onto programmes from level 1 to level 3. As well as the main site in Moulton, a small number of learners study at a satellite centre in Higham Ferrers which offers animal care and construction courses. The college is not currently recruiting apprentices.

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 provided training for lecturers in how to teach online before COVID-19 restrictions were imposed, and moved teaching to a virtual platform in March. Lecturers initially taught using learning materials on the college virtual learning environment (VLE) before teaching through video conferencing.

All learners were issued with information and communication technology (ICT) equipment, to access online lessons, learning resources and support. Learners, particularly those on lower level practical courses and those with special educational needs, found learning online difficult, so lecturers designed new ways to engage them. In level 1 construction, for example, learners struggled to concentrate in long theory-based lessons. Lecturers created shorter lessons and made use of interactive tools such as quizzes.

After restrictions eased and college reopened, managers prioritised those learners who needed to catch up with their practical work. This enabled learners to complete their course, progress to the next level or gain the skills to start employment.

From September 2020, leaders have made provision for all teaching to take place face to face. They describe rigorous risk assessment and the prioritisation of health and safety. Learners have been placed in support 'bubbles' and, when in communal areas, wear face coverings and socially distance. All staff and learners have completed health and safety training in limiting the spread of COVID-19.

Managers use a range of methods to ensure that teaching meets their expectations. Monthly meetings with staff are used to monitor learners' attendance, engagement and progress. The quality assurance team completes curriculum reviews in which they visit lessons, review schemes of work and the quality of lecturers' feedback on learners' work. Managers have also used a survey to check learners' satisfaction with their course.

Although managers are planning for all learners to complete work experience, they are aware that many employers will not be able to offer placements if COVID-19 restrictions continue.

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?

Lecturers report the ICT training helped them make online lessons more interesting through integrating video materials, quizzes and chat facilities. Learning coaches provided feedback to lecturers on how online lessons could be improved further.

Should further restrictions be imposed, lecturers anticipate maintaining existing timetables but moving entirely to live online lessons. During the initial restrictions, lecturers were allocated a caseload of learners to whom they provided academic, pastoral and technical support. They anticipate using the same model should the need arise again.

Lecturers have reorganised the sequence of the curriculum so that learners have greater opportunity to develop their practical skills at the start of the course. Lecturers note that practical skills are more difficult to teach remotely. In some

cases, additional qualifications will be used at the end of the year to revisit practical skills so learners can consolidate their expertise.

Following training in course sequencing, lecturers have adjusted the order in which they teach theory to better meet the needs of learners. For example, in animal management courses, some topics are taught earlier in the course to tackle gaps in learners' knowledge and to help them regain confidence in studying.

Measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have had some impact on teaching. Lecturers use online assessment and group activities to avoid the need for learners to circulate around the classroom. In construction, learners scan quick response (QR) codes to download tasks to their smartphones, and then use another QR code to upload the results of the task and review their own performance.

Careers advisors attend group tutorials and meet with learners individually to discuss their intended career destinations. Pastoral officers provide feedback to course leaders about learners' university and job applications, so they can monitor their progress.

Managers say learners have been positive about their return to college. They have attended well, and few have left their courses.

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

As learners are spending more time online due to COVID-19 restrictions, leaders recognise that keeping learners safe online is a key priority. Lecturers focus on the dangers of online grooming, the risks of talking to strangers online and revealing personal data. Learners say they are aware of risks relating to online learning and how to keep themselves safe.

There are a variety of ways learners can access help if they have a concern. As well as speaking to managers and pastoral officers, learners can use the college VLE to send a concern directly to the safeguarding team.

Leaders identify that some learners' mental health has suffered as a result of social restrictions. They have increased mental health first-aid training and have introduced therapy dogs to support anxious learners.

Leaders have continued to ensure they meet statutory safeguarding requirements. All staff undertake an annual update on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

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