

City Gateway

Interim visit report

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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 students and apprentices in this period, including learners with high needs and those with special educational needs and 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

City Gateway is a provider in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Young people and adults follow learning programmes at its two education and training centres in the borough. City Gateway offers traineeship and apprenticeship programmes. There are three traineeship programmes of two, three or six months in length. At the time of the inspection, there were 31 trainees, of which 16 were 16 to 18-year-olds and 15 were adults. The apprenticeship programmes are in customer services and business administration. There were 10 apprentices following these programmes. Nine were on level 3 apprenticeships, and one was on a level 2 apprenticeship.

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?

Many learners have disrupted educational backgrounds and require support to be able to study and go on into employment. Leaders have changed the emphasis of the curriculum content to have a greater focus on learners' well-being, so that they can support learners to stay on track during the challenges of the pandemic.

At the beginning of the pandemic, leaders moved to an online learning curriculum. Leaders acknowledge that there were challenges in implementing this new approach for learners and staff. Leaders swiftly recognised that too many learners did not attend online lessons. They also identified that employment opportunities for learners may be more difficult to secure during and immediately after the pandemic. As a result, they stopped teaching subject content and focused on careers and employability to help learners prepare better for employment.

Leaders moved the off-the-job training for apprentices, many of whom were working from home, to online learning. They continued to teach the same subject content to

apprentices. Managers strengthened their close working relationships with employers so that they could adapt the curriculum to suit the requirements of individual businesses and apprentices.

Leaders have worked with stakeholders to improve the way in which they teach the curriculum. For example, employers experienced in using information technology have helped staff to develop online learning materials that suit the needs of apprentices. Leaders recognise that they still have more work to do to prepare learners for online training in the future.

The board of trustees understands and supports the actions taken by leaders in response to the pandemic. The chair of trustees reports that the communications between the board and leaders have increased and that the board is fully informed about the decisions that leaders make. They are confident that learners are continuing to make good 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?

The move to online learning at the beginning of the pandemic proved challenging for learners and staff. Some trainees did not participate in online sessions because they did not have the technology or space available to work at home.

Tutors have established individual action plans for apprentices so that they can continue to learn remotely. They have focused on helping apprentices to develop the behaviours they need for work, for example being punctual and meeting deadlines. Tutors have put a greater emphasis on employability and careers advice. Learners say that they receive the advice and guidance they need to help them make decisions about their future careers.

Tutors set apprentices targets and assessors check apprentices' progress more frequently so that they can identify if learners get behind with their work. Managers have introduced revised tracking processes to monitor apprentices' progress.

Tutors help apprentices to get ready for future employment, for example how to prepare for online interviews and understand the challenges of working remotely. Managers have changed the order in which topics are taught so that trainees develop their knowledge of English and mathematics early in their course. Tutors continue to use the assessment of the skills and knowledge that trainees have at the start of their course, to inform what they teach. Tutors assess trainees' progress through frequent testing. Since restrictions have eased, leaders have reintroduced face-to-face teaching for trainees to help them to make up missed learning more swiftly.

Tutors continue to develop online resources, which managers and learners review and on which they provide feedback. For example, learners requested more video clips to help them understand practical aspects of their course better.

A small number of learners have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Tutors continue to adapt their teaching to meet the individual needs of these learners. Weekly case reviews ensure that managers and tutors know the progress that these learners make.

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

Staff have maintained safeguarding as a high priority for learners. They have recognised the impact of the pandemic on the well-being of learners and have used coaching sessions to monitor learners' welfare.

Leaders have provided learners with information about staying safe during the pandemic. They have updated the website to provide links to external agencies providing support, such as debt advice. Tutors have reinforced safeguarding with learners during coaching sessions. They encourage learners to discuss any concerns, such as feeling isolated.

Staff have continued safeguarding training during the pandemic. Safeguarding staff have undertaken online training during national restrictions. Tutors and assessors have completed units of the online training so that they can support learners to work safely.

Learners state that they feel safe and know how to report any concerns. They understand the importance of online safety, such as keeping passwords safe and not sharing personal details.

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