

The Bournemouth and Poole College

Interim visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Paul James, Her Majesty's Inspector

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Type of provider: General further education 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 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

The Bournemouth and Poole College is a large general further education college located on three sites. The college is the largest provider of academic and vocational education in Dorset. The two main sites are based at Lansdowne, Bournemouth and North Road, Poole. The third site is located at the Fulcrum at Tower Park, Poole, and is the base for the college's construction provision. Courses are offered from pre-entry to degree level, with a range of full- and part-time subjects offered in most subjects. Education programmes for young people account for just over half of the college's provision. The college has approximately 1,253 apprentices on programmes from level 2 to level 4. Around 121 learners are in receipt of high needs funding.

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 made the decision to move all provision online at the start of lockdown. After a brief period of experimentation, leaders made the decision to adopt a single platform as the main tool for their online delivery. Leaders recognised that not all learners had access to the appropriate information technology to access learning remotely. Therefore, they provided bursaries and loaned laptops to learners. Managers report that most learners were able to participate in online learning, and those learners spoken to said they had felt well supported.

Although the majority of their learning has now moved back to face-to-face sessions, leaders are reordering programmes to mitigate the effect of potential future

lockdowns. This means practical sessions have been brought forward so learners can learn using the specialist resources on site.

Leaders moved part of the enrolment process online to reduce physical contact for staff and learners. Managers adapt these processes to support different learner cohorts. For example, ESOL learners complete a bespoke enrolment process, which is designed to consider the specific challenges they may face in accessing and interpreting written text online. Managers produce written resources, using accessible language and graphics, designed specifically for ESOL learners. They have also extended the length of the enrolment period so that learners can receive additional support and guidance.

Leaders have worked closely with employers throughout the pandemic. This has helped them understand the significant changes in employer's businesses. Employers say they are well supported by college staff. They greatly appreciate the work staff have done to ensure that that furloughed apprentices are still able to continue learning on their training programmes. Leaders also support employers when they have to make staff redundancies. This support has included delivering short courses on topics such as interview skills and curriculum vitae writing. These courses are designed to assist unemployed learners to secure new employment.

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?

Managers report they have useful monthly quality review meetings. They use these meetings to monitor attendance, the suitability of the curriculum, assess risk for vulnerable learners and evaluate contingency plans for any projected changes in COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions.

Leaders have enhanced existing reporting systems to make monitoring more transparent. They say it is now easier to see trends and identify necessary interventions. For example, new processes for monitoring attendance include scrutiny of different patterns of absence, such as learners who are self-isolating.

Leaders recognise the importance of developing teachers' expertise in using online teaching tools. They have provided staff with access to an accredited program which focuses on developing innovative remote teaching skills. All teaching staff have either completed this qualification or are working towards it.

Leaders and managers have built on existing arrangements to check the quality of their learners' experience by moving them online where necessary. For example, managers now join online lessons to observe teaching, as opposed to visiting in person. Teachers welcome the consistent approach to quality assurance across the college. They value the feedback from managers on how they can improve the teaching and learning. Teachers appreciate the input from the special educational

needs and/or disabilities team in supporting learners with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) throughout the pandemic.

Teachers and managers are pleased with the progress they have made in implementing online learning. Managers report online sessions are of high quality and that learners are making progress. However, teachers acknowledge that during lockdown many learners missed being on the college site and the wider social interaction that it offers.

Managers have taken advantage of videoconferencing software to increase the number of external speakers providing careers advice to learners. For example, recent online talks from members of the National Health Service gave learners useful information on the breadth of careers options available.

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

During lockdown, leaders monitored the well-being of their most vulnerable learners through weekly case reviews. They used these reviews to update learners' risk assessments and take appropriate remedial actions.

Leaders recognise the need to increase the focus on well-being in tutorial sessions. Personal Development Tutors (PDTs) now deliver sessions on topics such as how to stay safe online. PDTs use surveys to help assess learners' safeguarding knowledge and identify any gaps. Learners confirm they have developed their knowledge of how to stay safe through these sessions.

Leaders have employed additional staff to support learners during the pandemic. COVID-19 marshals now ensure that the necessary restrictions are in place and adhered to. The marshals speak with learners, offering them advice about how to stay safe on site and while travelling, as well as what to do if they need to self-isolate. Staff and learners have also completed an online COVID-19 safety qualification.

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