

# Southport College

Interim visit report

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<b>Type of provider:</b>	General further education college
<b>Address:</b>	Mornington Road Southport Merseyside PR9 0TT

## 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

On 31 January 2018, Southport College merged with King George V sixth-form college (KGV). The college has two sites, both in the centre of Southport. The site in Mornington Road provides a wide range of vocational and technical qualifications for young people and adults. The KGV site provides academic and vocational level 3 programmes exclusively for young people. At the time of the interim visit, there were 1,629 learners aged 16 to 18, more than half of whom were studying at level 3. Of the 591 adults on programme in November 2020, just under half were studying at level 1. There were 415 apprentices, more than half of whom were studying at advanced level or higher. The college received high-needs funding for 35 learners. The largest subject areas are: health and care; science and mathematics; business, administration and law; and arts and media. 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 responded rapidly to the disruption to learning that the COVID-19 restrictions caused. They made comprehensive arrangements to move most learning online in anticipation of the restrictions implemented.

Leaders quickly identified learners who did not have access to online learning at home and provided them with the necessary resources. They provided additional training to staff to enable them to become confident when teaching online.

Leaders carefully reviewed what learning strategies were effective. Teachers have developed innovative ways of teaching through demonstrations via a video link. For

example, motor vehicle teachers demonstrated how to service an engine on their own car. Hairdressing teachers demonstrated how to style hair.

Leaders have detailed curriculum plans in place for each subject. These have been designed to respond to changing circumstances as they arise. They are able to respond quickly to adapt the curriculum and teaching methods if necessary. College staff provide teaching which includes face-to-face learning in a classroom and live streaming of lessons online.

Since September, leaders have ensured that as much face-to-face teaching takes place as possible. Class sizes have been reduced to allow safe social distancing to take place. Leaders have prioritised on-site lessons for learners on vocational courses and those who have high needs, so they can attend as much as possible and do not fall behind.

When learners returned to college in September 2020, leaders ensured that teachers identified any gaps in skills or knowledge that learners had. They provided catch-up lessons where needed.

Throughout the pandemic, senior leaders have worked with employers and stakeholders to adapt the curriculum. For example, learners studying business who were furloughed concentrated on the theoretical aspects of their course. They received online teaching and regular contact from college staff to help and support them.

**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?**

Leaders and managers continue to assure the quality of the curriculum that meets the needs of learners, including those with special educational needs (SEND) and high needs. They have become more flexible in how they gather information on the quality of teaching and learning. For example, leaders are able to observe lessons remotely as teachers now use more technology and teach lessons online.

At the start of the COVID-19 restrictions, teachers received intensive training to develop their online teaching skills. Leaders continue to use professional development coaches to personalise staff training in order to improve the learners' experience. Teachers use various technologies to bring learning to life. For example, in sport, teachers use 'augmented reality' to have 'virtual skeletons' in remote anatomy and physiology lessons.

Teachers say that online group project work is beneficial to learners' wider experiences. They recognise that some learners struggle with online learning, and that some subjects where learners are required to develop with higher-level practical skills are less suited to online teaching. During the COVID-19 restrictions, managers, teachers and support staff kept in close contact with learners, particularly those who they considered to be vulnerable. This enabled staff to closely monitor learners' welfare and progress.

Since the start of the pandemic, staff have improved the quality of online learning resources. For example, they moved the teaching of English and mathematics online for apprentices and provided additional resources to support their learning. Leaders intend to continue to use the online application and enrolment process, the one-stop access point for support and online counselling.

Staff ensure that learners have access to careers information, advice and guidance through the tutorial programme, 'virtual' campus tours and open events. For example, medicine applicants have completed virtual work experience through observing general practitioners. To help new learners moving from school to college, staff held virtual and face-to-face visits. New learners received online preparatory work to get them ready to study when they joined the college in September.

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

Senior leaders had a clear strategy to keep learners safe during the time the college was closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Staff contacted learners regularly to check they were safe and to discuss their mental health and well-being. Governors received regular updates on safeguarding concerns and monitored the impact of the actions taken.

All staff have continued to receive regular safeguarding training and updates. Leaders provided a range of safeguarding-related support such as how to teach safely whilst using online learning platforms.

Learners say they feel safe while in college and when working online. They understand the importance of how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremism. They say that the isolation felt during closure affected their mental health and well-being.

During the summer, leaders contacted learners and their parents to reassure them that the college learning environment was safe for their return in September.

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