

Elliott Hudson College

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	141940
Name of lead inspector:	Malcolm Fraser, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	16 to 19 free school
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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 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.

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

Elliott Hudson College is a 16 to 19 free school and is part of The Gorse Academies Trust. Located in the south west of Leeds, the college provides study programmes for young people aged 16 to 19. At the time of the visit, 1,067 students were enrolled on courses. Most students are working towards A levels in their study programmes. Just under a fifth of students study a mixture of A level and applied general subjects. Four students are in receipt of funding for high needs.

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 consider that they applied the experiences of staff and students during the initial period of COVID-19 restriction to inform their planning of the curriculum from September 2020. They value the expertise and support that the academy trust provides. This has enabled them to carry out risk assessments of the college buildings and proposed activities, so that they can plan and implement an adapted curriculum safely.

Leaders listened to the views of students, many of whom experience multiple challenges due to their personal and family circumstances, when considering delivery of the curriculum. Their view is that although most students engage well in remote and online learning, they value attending the college. Leaders have therefore prioritised arrangements to enable students to attend face-to-face lessons. Through careful planning and the support of teachers, students and stakeholders, they have

achieved their objective of providing a safe environment where staff can deliver an appropriate blend of face-to-face and online learning. They provided training for staff in online teaching techniques, such as using video conference platforms.

Leaders explained how they have supported teachers to review information about the level of engagement of students and their progress between March and September 2020. This has enabled them to identify gaps in students' knowledge and support students to catch up on lost learning.

Leaders recognise that many students come from disadvantaged backgrounds or have additional support needs which can have a negative impact on their ability to learn remotely. Leaders expect teachers to carry out risk assessments of all students so that any necessary additional support can be provided. They are aware that the home circumstances of many students, including a lack of internet access, can restrict students' ability to learn remotely. Leaders have established quiet spaces in college for these students to continue studying outside lessons so that they are not disadvantaged.

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 consider that, with the support of leaders, they swiftly adapted to teaching online during the initial period of COVID-19 restrictions, and that this enabled most students to continue to improve their knowledge and skills. Leaders and teachers continue to work with students to overcome any barriers to learning remotely. Leaders purchased additional laptops and broadband dongles which they loan to students who need them. Students are now able to purchase laptops and pay by instalment so that they can participate in online learning.

To minimise movement around the college, leaders implemented a five-hour college day in which students join lessons in a single subject each day. While recognising that this approach can be intense, teachers consider that it helps students to make good progress. Teachers continue to provide learning and support for students on the days that they do not attend the college, through a variety of online and other remote methods. They consider that they use a range of appropriate assessment strategies to check students' progress in developing knowledge and skills, and they use this information to plan further learning.

Leaders and staff monitor students' attendance at college and their participation in online learning. They consider that attendance for all groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), remains high. Teachers believe that they have a good understanding of the needs of each of their students, including those with SEND. They explained how they tailor their teaching and the support that they provide, to ensure that no groups or individuals are disadvantaged. They are concerned, however, about a small number of students

who have had to miss many lessons as a consequence of having to self-isolate multiple times.

Staff ensure that students continue to have weekly online tutorials. They provide supportive activities in tutorials and cover a range of topics, including advice and guidance about higher education and career progression options.

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

Leaders built on what they consider to be the already comprehensive processes in place for identifying safeguarding risks, by taking account of additional risks arising from COVID-19. They explained that they put in place additional training and guidance to help students stay safe while spending more time online. Leaders support teachers to provide a tutorial curriculum that focuses on appropriate behaviours and personal responsibility when online.

Leaders and staff responsible for safeguarding believe that, throughout the pandemic, they have ensured that they meet their statutory obligations to safeguard students. Leaders are aware that safeguarding support for a few students, such as that provided by social workers, has been affected by the pandemic. They ensure that staff provide additional support when they identify any risks to students' well-being.

Students said that they receive guidance and support about how to stay safe, including when online, and that they know whom to contact if they have any concerns.

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