

St John Rigby RC Sixth Form College

Interim visit report

Unique reference number: 130523

Name of lead inspector: Ruth Stammers, Her Majesty's Inspector

Visit dates: 18 to 19 November 2020

Type of provider: Sixth form college

Address: Gathurst Road
Orrell
Wigan
Lancashire
WN5 0LJ

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.

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

St John Rigby Roman Catholic Sixth Form College is an inclusive sixth-form college under the trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Liverpool, situated in the west of Wigan. The majority of students who attend the college are from Wigan, with a few travelling from the west of Lancashire.

At the time of the visit, there were 1,523 students in learning. Around 900 students were following a variety of A-level programmes, around 570 were studying predominantly level 3 vocational subjects, with the remainder studying level 1 and level 2 programmes.

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 explained several challenges that they faced during COVID-19 restrictions. These challenges included the need to source laptop computers for students to access learning, and the training of staff and students on the use of online learning platforms. Leaders feel that they have resolved these issues through strategic planning. They say that they are now in a much stronger position to manage online delivery.

Leaders have now introduced a mixture of face-to-face and online delivery for students. Most students access face-to-face learning on alternate weeks. Students

continue with their studies online on the week that they are not in college. Leaders have also introduced weekly face-to-face delivery for those students who are studying practical subjects such as sport, performing arts and music. This allows students to receive support from their teachers in college to consolidate and improve their practical skills.

Leaders state that students miss seeing their peers and teachers more frequently. They plan to return to entirely face-to-face teaching as soon as it is safe to do so.

Leaders developed online forums and workbooks for applicants who were due to join the college in September 2020. They recognised that the majority of new students had not received structured teaching for over six months. Parents say that this additional support boosted their children's confidence and kept them up to date with learning.

Although leaders have faced challenges during the pandemic, they recognise the positive changes that they have made. They now collaborate more closely with other local colleges on issues such as mutually agreed enrolment dates. The use of online platforms has also given leaders greater visibility of the quality of teaching and the standard of students' work.

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 identified that returning students had missed parts of the curriculum while they were learning remotely. Teachers completed informal assessments to identify gaps in knowledge. Where there are common themes, leaders are utilising government funding to enable them to provide additional, small-group tuition sessions to fill these gaps.

Teachers have adapted the way that they deliver careers advice and guidance due to COVID-19 restrictions. For example, health and social care students would usually attend work placements. As they have been unable to do this, teachers have arranged online careers talks from healthcare professionals such as paramedics, midwives and occupational health specialists. This has given learners an insight into working in the healthcare sector.

Leaders identified that students were missing out on the wider aspects of education such as trips, visits and participation in competitions. In order to continue with these activities, they arranged for students to participate in these events virtually. Politics students attended a virtual tour of Parliament. Biology students competed in the virtual, university-led Biology Olympiad, where they extracted DNA from a strawberry and made a model of a heart from household objects.

Teachers explain how confident they are in using new technology to support online learning. They state that they have accessed comprehensive and bespoke training

sessions that have enhanced their digital skills. Colleagues are now sharing this practice in team meetings and more widely across the college.

Most students value online lessons and time in the classroom with teachers equally. Teachers have seen an increase in student participation and engagement in online lessons. For example, in the 'values for living' lessons, students are more confident in sharing their ideas and thoughts on moral and ethical issues.

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

Leaders identified additional pressure on families during the pandemic due to issues such as financial hardship and stress. Leaders set up a welfare hub, which enables students to access counselling and the college chaplaincy team remotely. They say that this provides students with a vital virtual sanctuary.

Leaders provided additional support for students with autism spectrum disorder and their families. They recognised that the lack of routine and structure caused by not attending college was particularly difficult for this group of students. Progress tutors increased contact with these students and engaged with a local charity to train staff on the specific needs surrounding autism spectrum disorder.

To address a rise in domestic violence, leaders altered the order of the tutorial programme to bring forward lessons on healthy relationships, and alcohol and drug abuse as they see these as key links to this rise.

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