

# Beaumont College

Interim visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 131480

**Name of lead inspector:** Anita Pyrkotsch-Jones HMI

**Visit dates:** 26–27 November 2020

**Type of provider:** Independent specialist college

**Address:** Slyne Road  
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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 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

Beaumont College is a residential independent specialist college owned and managed by Saludem/Ambito Education. It provides education and training for young people with physical or sensory disabilities and/or learning difficulties including those with complex support needs and those with autism spectrum disorders. The majority of students are from the north-west of England. The main college site is in Lancaster. The three satellite sites located in Carlisle, Blackpool and Barrow-in-Furness were established in response to local authority requirements for local non-residential provision. At the time of the visit, 112 students funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and three students funded by other sources were attending the college.

### **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?**

Despite the college remaining open for residential and day students during the initial COVID-19 restrictions in the spring of 2020, most parents chose to keep their young people at home to shield them due to their health vulnerabilities. Leaders say that they responded quickly to ensure that they could maintain good quality education for their students and to comply with Department for Education guidelines. Almost all students returned to college by September 2020.

Staff received training that helped them develop online learning resources so that they could teach their classes remotely. Students who had returned home were provided with computers so that they could participate in online activities and video calls with their teachers.

Staff used social distancing guidelines and wore face masks when visiting students at home. They delivered paper-based resources and checked on students' mental health and well-being, as well as that of their parents and/or carers. Students were provided with resources, such as bicycles so that they could continue to exercise during national restrictions.

During national restrictions, community venues used by the college's satellite centres closed. Many are yet to reopen. Leaders worked swiftly to find alternative venues.

Leaders continue to develop the curriculum to meet the needs of individual students linked to their education, health and care (EHC) plans. They work closely with the local authority and parents/carers to frequently review and amend EHC plans to ensure that students' objectives and targets are appropriate.

Leaders told us that they were very conscious that they needed to maintain staffs' well-being and mental health during national restrictions. An employee assistance programme provides staff with access to counselling services and well-being webinars.

Leaders work closely with a number of stakeholders including local authorities, parents/carers and social care settings. Stakeholders appreciate the work that staff do to support students. They are particularly thankful to leaders for continuing to provide education throughout national restrictions.

**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?**

Before the pandemic, all teaching was face-to-face. During the first week of national restrictions, the number of students attending college decreased considerably. Staff had to think carefully about how they would convert face-to-face teaching in a classroom to suit the challenges of remote and online teaching. They developed personalised learning resources to meet the specific needs of each student. These included online and remote learning resources and paper-based resources that were delivered to the homes of many students.

Staff received training on how to use technology in their teaching. They worked with their peers to develop their digital technology skills and become more proficient. Staff feel that they quickly became adept at using digital technology for online and remote learning and, this is something they will continue to do in the future. They now appreciate that digital technology is a useful teaching and learning tool.

Leaders decided that all students, including returning students, would have an extended assessment of their starting points. Staff identified where students had gaps in their learning and have adjusted students' learning plans and targets to reflect this.

Due to COVID-19 local and national restrictions, students have been unable to attend work experience placements. Teachers have spent time with students researching and practising the skills needed for the workplace. For example, students wanting to work in business administration practise scheduling appointments and using video conferencing for meetings.

Staff feel that the college community has strengthened since the start of the pandemic. For example, in art classes, students and staff created a mural to represent how the pandemic has made them feel.

Students continued to receive information, advice and guidance about their courses and next steps during their transition into college and throughout their courses. Students are encouraged to think about their future and next steps such as supported employment and assisted living.

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

Leaders told us about the information they gave to students on staying safe when returning to college. They provided virtual tours of the college that explained the new one-way system, the two-metre social distancing rule in classrooms and what staff would look like wearing masks. They say that this was invaluable in supporting students' transition back into college. For those students with heightened anxiety, staff created 'social stories' about the safe return to college.

Leaders use an internal COVID-19 track and trace system, reporting any issues or positive COVID-19 tests to local councils and the infection control hub.

Students that use technology at home complete e-safety courses. Parents/carers receive detailed guidance on internet safety and the use of parental controls. Through weekly welfare checks, teachers and students discuss how to stay safe online including when using social media and online gaming platforms.

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