

Morley College (trading as Morley College London)

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	130412
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Type of provider:	Specialist designated institution
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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

Morley College London is one of nine specialist, designated adult education colleges in England. It is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The college merged with Kensington and Chelsea College in February 2020 and now has three main sites in Waterloo, North Kensington and Chelsea. The college has satellite centres in Stockwell and Rotherhithe.

Morley College London currently has approximately 5,300 students, of which the vast majority are adults. The college specialises in visual and performing arts, culture and applied sciences at levels 1 to 5. There are 138 students on higher education programmes. The college also offers programmes in foundation skills, access to higher education and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The vast majority of courses do not lead to qualifications

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, governors and managers formed a COVID-19 response oversight group at the start of the national restrictions. The group put in place plans to move all courses online. The college stayed open for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders recognised that many students were vulnerable and that they needed to keep them engaged and motivated. They set up an 'at home with Morley' website to do this, which students accessed to take part in online activities, watch subject videos and listen to Morley Radio.

Stakeholders and subcontractors talk very positively about the relationship that they have with the college and how the college responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. They appreciate how quickly leaders adapted the curriculum to meet the needs of the communities they serve. For example, in North Kensington, leaders have worked with stakeholders to put together a range of courses to help young people not in education, employment or training.

Staff consider the impact of COVID-19 on the industry related to the subjects they teach, when designing the curriculum. This helps teachers mirror what is happening in that industry and manage students' expectations. For example, in professional photography, managers remodelled the course to help students create online exhibitions. In media, where there is a challenge to find project work with employers, teachers added specific units that allow students to become curators of their own work from home.

Leaders and managers say they continue to adapt the curriculum, adding in courses and programmes when they identify a need. For example, courses are available to help parents who are home-schooling their children in English and mathematics. Plans are in place to offer adults courses that focus on work-related skills, and a new online access to higher education course is being developed. Leaders use funding from the local authority to support the development of online content. They have also upgraded the software teachers use in classrooms for live-streaming when students access their classes from home.

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 have designed the curriculum so that students attend a mix of classroom and online lessons. They consider students' feedback and personal circumstances to decide this. For example, students on some ESOL courses told leaders they struggle to understand when learning online at home. Teachers adapt and change the order of topics they teach depending on how students attend. For example, in art courses, teachers taught students online portfolio skills and web design first. These topics can be taught fully online at the start of the course and before students come into the workshops to complete practical skills.

Teachers state that they use assessment more frequently to check if students retain information from their online lessons accessed from home. They then adjust their face-to-face lessons to cover any gaps in students' knowledge and skills. Teachers say that most students should complete their courses on time. Teachers arrange extra revision sessions for students on accounting courses, as their examinations have been delayed, to help them retain their knowledge.

Students who inspectors spoke with say they know how they are progressing and can link earlier learning with more recent learning. Students on childcare courses

explained how previous learning about policies helps them understand the rules about observing babies in a nursery. Students speak positively about their online learning. Students like the group work and feel they learn as much online as when they learn in the classroom.

Leaders and managers say that through their quality assurance activities they have identified areas of strength when teachers teach lessons online. For example, leaders state that teachers use the online breakout rooms effectively to manage group activities, and students are comfortable to share their work in the chat facility with their peers to get feedback.

Students receive careers advice and guidance and support with completing university applications online. They also have online talks from employers to inform them of trends within the sector they are learning.

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

Leaders have noticed that more students, particularly younger students, access the well-being support available to them. They have increased the time external services, such as MIND, are accessible in the college to students. Managers also say that low-level anxiety has increased for adult students. They have put in place a series of workshops covering topics such as insomnia, anxiety and stress in partnership with the National Health Service.

Leaders and managers say they have updated their safeguarding and health and safety policies and procedures. These include how leaders will respond to positive cases of COVID-19 in students and staff. Their system allows them to send out an automatic email to students who are self-isolating at home. Emails inform students how to access support online, their learning and free school meals, where appropriate.

Staff give students information about keeping safe online at induction, through group discussion and by email updates. Staff have discussions with students about COVID-19 conspiracy theories and false information online.

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