

# Hull College

Interim visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130579

**Name of lead inspector:** Steve Hunsley, Her Majesty's Inspector

**Visit dates:** 24 to 25 November 2020

**Type of provider:** General further education college

**Address:** Queens Gardens  
Wilberforce Drive  
Hull  
HU1 3DG

## 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.

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

Hull College is a large general further education college that recruits learners and apprentices from across the city of Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire. There are currently 2,440 adult learners, 1,755 learners aged 16 to 18, 913 apprentices, 164 learners aged 14 to 16, and 101 learners with high needs on programmes at the college. The college uses six 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 and managers consider that they have been able to confront successfully the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent rapid increase in infections locally. They explained how they acted swiftly at the start of the period of restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic to support their tutors to move to online learning.

Leaders recognise and understand the extent of digital poverty across the city of Hull. They have invested in laptops and internet dongles for learners to use at home and in the college. They have also provided additional support for learners who might otherwise not be able to access their learning remotely.

Leaders have decided to make online learning an integral part of their teaching strategy in the future. They recognise the benefits that it brings for their learners, many of whom said that they prefer this approach. This is because it allows them to access their learning at times to suit them and to fit in with their commitments outside college.

Leaders described how they have supported staff to provide online learning while also managing a return to the classroom and practical workshop environments where necessary. For example, managers have invested in high performance web cameras so that learners can access the live streaming of beauty therapy treatments.

Leaders and managers recognise that the pandemic has led to delays in learners' and apprentices' assessment. During the summer, managers and tutors brought apprentices into the college for assessment and worked with examination bodies to review and modify the assessment process. This included providing remote assessment of apprentices' skills and knowledge.

Leaders and managers believe that providing regular information and communication for staff during the closure of the college was crucial. Tutors told us that they value the training and support that managers provided.

**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 told us that they are proud of the way in which tutors are providing education for their learners. In many cases, tutors have changed the order in which they teach the curriculum to accommodate the restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. This included moving practical elements of the curriculum to later in programme so that they could be taught when college reopened fully.

Managers described how staff have worked together in developing learning materials and in refining their online teaching skills. Tutors have adapted their programmes so that they comprise a blend of online and face-to-face teaching. They deliver practical sessions in college and then extend learners' knowledge and skills through the use of online resources. Managers attend online learning sessions to ensure that tutors are delivering a curriculum that meets the needs of learners.

While the college was closed to learners, tutors identified key parts of the curriculum that could be delivered online so that learners could continue to develop their subject knowledge. For example, tutors in the 14 to 16 provision provided a science application to allow learners to take part in experiments remotely. Tutors believe that, without this, learners would have had more gaps in their learning.

Staff continue to provide careers information and advice to learners online. This includes the use of social media to respond to questions from learners about future career options. Staff continue to work with the local authority and other agencies remotely to ensure that learners receive appropriate advice and guidance.

Managers allocated additional support for learners who have high needs and offered remote support during the period of COVID-19 restrictions. Vulnerable learners with education health care plans were invited into the college once the restrictions were lifted so that staff could monitor and check on their health and well-being.

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

Leaders and managers have implemented a range of measures to ensure the safety and well-being of learners and staff when in college and when studying remotely. For example, they have created specific group 'bubbles' for teaching sessions in their 14 to 16 provision and allocated additional support for those learners who have high needs and are most at risk.

Leaders prioritised support for learners already known to be vulnerable during the restrictions imposed during the pandemic. They deployed staff to provide personal support in the form of home visits. They maintained regular telephone contact with vulnerable learners, referring them to external support agencies when required.

Leaders and managers have revised the induction process to prioritise keeping learners safe online. Tutors remind learners of the importance of online safety and provide information for parents and carers, so they too are aware of the possible risks associated with online activity.

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