

Brentwood Community College

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	142914
Name of lead inspector:	Suzanne Wainwright, Her Majesty's Inspector
Visit dates:	18 to 19 November 2020
Type of provider:	Independent specialist college
Address:	Cherry Lane Sale M33 4GY

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.

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

Brentwood Community College is located in Sale, Greater Manchester. It was established in 2014 as a result of the local area special educational needs review for students aged over 19 years old who were progressing from the associated special school. It was registered formally as a company limited by guarantee and a specialist post-16 institution in 2016. The college provides education and support for students who have severe learning difficulties, profound learning difficulties and/or autism spectrum condition. Students' ability levels range from pre-entry level to entry level 1. At the time of the visit, 17 students attended the college. The vast majority of these were from the Trafford local authority area.

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 said that they made few changes to the curriculum during the COVID-19 restrictions. This helped to maintain a familiar routine and structure for their students. Staff contacted students regularly and worked closely with parents/carers to identify each student's specific needs. They shared pictorial prompts to help students carry out tasks at home, such as cooking simple meals and understanding hand hygiene.

Students' needs are diverse. Leaders explained that they provide sufficient levels of challenge for all students through a flexible and individualised curriculum. This includes enrichment activities, such as art and music therapy. However, leaders recognise that there are currently gaps in the curriculum. These relate to external work experience placements, community visits to indoor venues and hydrotherapy

sessions. As alternatives, students participate in college-based work experience in areas such as horticulture, car washing and animal care. Leaders provide fitness activities to help young people stay healthy. For example, staff run 'adapted' bicycle-riding sessions on Saturday mornings. Staff of a local premier league football club provide support for students in the local community and extra-curricular activities at lunchtimes.

Leaders helped parents/carers to understand the benefits of students attending college, for example to enable students to access professional support. Most students returned to college on a part-time basis by the end of the summer term. Leaders said that this helped students to overcome behavioural and mental-health issues caused by a loss of social contact and confidence. Leaders are using additional funding to support students to return to their previous skill levels. The number of speech and language therapy sessions for identified students has been increased.

Leaders worked closely with the local authority and external agencies to support their students during the pandemic. The local authority provided leaders with up-to-date government guidance that was easily understandable. Stakeholders say that staff have excelled in providing pastoral support and education throughout the pandemic.

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?

Staff undertook risk assessments to determine whether students should return to college. Most students now attend learning full time. Three students are currently working remotely from home because of health risks.

Most students cannot access online learning independently. During the national restrictions, teachers directed parents/carers to online resources and websites to support students' learning. They helped parents/carers to put filters on computer equipment to protect their young people online. Staff took paper-based learning resources to students' homes, so that they could continue to develop their skills. For example, students planted sunflower seeds and used English and mathematical skills to record their observations and measure the flower's growth. Students received sensory equipment such as stress balls, to help them to regulate their behaviour and stress.

Staff reassessed students' skills levels upon their return to college. A few students had regressed in their behaviour and communication skills. Working with parents/carers, staff updated students' targets accordingly, focusing on education, health and care plan outcomes.

Teachers made a few modifications to the curriculum as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. They replaced supermarket shopping and money skills with online shopping and 'click and collect'. Leaders replaced hydrotherapy with rebound

therapy. Students say that they enjoy this new activity and it has encouraged them to take part in physical exercise.

Teachers continued to update their skills online. Training included updates on safeguarding, 'Sign-along', food hygiene, the safe administration of medication, mental well-being, and asthma and epilepsy awareness.

Staff continued to provide students with advice about their next steps. Leaders secured further funding from the local authority to retain four students who were due to leave the college in July. Due to the pandemic, they needed additional skills development before moving into social care provision.

Leaders said that they continue to scrutinise the quality of teaching and learning through 'learning walks' and 'learning conversations' with classroom teaching staff.

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

Leaders told us how they monitored the safety of their students during national restrictions. They contacted parents/carers weekly to discuss learning, well-being and support. Staff used social stories to help students to understand the pandemic and to support them back into college. Leaders created a separate entrance/exit for college students, to avoid them mixing with school pupils. Students work in small 'group bubbles' with their own staff and classrooms.

Specialist support teams provided additional help to parents/carers in times of increased difficulty, for example when students' behaviour deteriorated. Staff continued to work collaboratively with the community learning disabilities team to provide continuous communication with families. Leaders helped parents/carers to access free school meal vouchers. They also delivered food parcels to vulnerable families.

Students know how to keep themselves safe. They understand that wearing face coverings and washing hands prevent germs. Students explained that they learn how to cross the road and prepare meals safely. They know not to speak to strangers and why.

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