

City Lit

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	130401
Name of lead inspector:	Lynda Brown, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Specialist designated institution
Address:	Keeley Street Covent Garden London WC2B 4BA

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 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

The City Literary Institute (City Lit), established in 1919, is a community learning provider with charitable status located in Covent Garden. City Lit offers approximately 4,763 part time courses annually to 26,285 adult learners across London.

Almost all learners are on programmes that are not qualification based. A very small proportion of learners follow accredited programmes, such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and functional skills and GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics. Most learners are on level 1 programmes with a smaller proportion of learners on levels 2, 3 and 4.

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?

Early in the pandemic, leaders changed their teaching to be online. They prioritised teaching those courses where learners were working towards examinations, for example GCSEs and A levels, or where learners needed to complete a course to progress to the next level.

Leaders also continued to run those courses that were suitable for online delivery, such as creative writing and humanities. Initially, leaders provided learners on courses such as contemporary jewellery and visual arts courses, with online projects so that they could continue with their studies. Tutors and learners recognised that these courses were challenging to teach online and subsequently postponed them until face-to-face learning could start again.

Leaders provided training courses to help tutors to develop the skills that they needed to teach online, such as how to use different learning platforms. Tutors, who previously had not used online learning, have developed new digital teaching strategies which they plan to use in the future.

Senior leaders have kept governors informed of how they have responded to the pandemic, and governors support the actions that leaders have taken. Governors and leaders have kept the quality of provision as a high priority. They have continued to monitor learners' progress through online platforms where they check on the work learners have completed and their progress. Leaders report the proportion of learners who attend and stay on their courses has improved since the move to online learning.

The change to online learning has led to increased applications to the college from a broader geographical area. Many learners apply for courses that are not available from their local providers, such as Welsh. Learners who are too anxious to leave their homes can access online courses and work from home. Governors and senior leaders support a future move to more online courses but recognise the need to retain the ethos of the college in supporting local community learning.

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?

Tutors, at the start of the pandemic, understood that most learners did not have high-level digital skills and they would require support to be able to study at home. They appreciated the training that leaders provided to improve their skills and support learners to learn online. Tutors developed interactive teaching strategies, such as the use of breakout rooms for small group discussions in creative writing. Managers review new materials so that they assure the quality of online learning resources.

Many learners report that online learning has been positive for them. Learners with hearing impairments review materials in advance of lessons and learners with dyslexia can manipulate materials to meet their learning needs. Learners with anxiety found that not having to travel provided them with more time to do their work at home. Tutors use online interviews with the local job centres to provide learners with careers advice and guidance.

Tutors support each other to develop their online skills and share good practice. They consult with learners to understand if they enjoy learning online and are making progress. Tutors provide broad experiences for learners to develop their practical skills. For example, in visual arts, learners made a sewn quilt patch to be exhibited in a museum.

Managers have plans to support learners who do not have access to technology. Where learners cannot submit work, for example in practical music, tutors assess

learners' progress by listening to them play instruments over the telephone. Tutors have ensured that new learners are prepared for their learning by providing online support sessions and taster sessions.

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

Senior leaders have continued to make learners' safety a high priority. Managers put training in place for tutors so that they understood how to move course content online and keep learners safe.

When learners returned to face-to-face teaching, leaders took actions to keep learners safe. They limited the number of learners in classrooms and staggered start and finish times of lessons. Leaders introduced a track and trace system within the college prior to the government initiative. They ran this alongside the government track and trace when it came into effect.

Tutors have supported learners to maintain their well-being. They contact learners frequently, particularly those learners identified as vulnerable before the pandemic, to check if they are well or need support with their work.

Leaders understand that tutors need to maintain good mental health. They have provided access to well-being workshops and meditation courses for tutors since the start of the pandemic.

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