

MI ComputSolutions Incorporated

Interim visit report

Unique reference number: 58370

Name of lead inspector: Jon Bowman, Her Majesty's Inspector

Visit dates: 30 November to 1 December 2020

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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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.

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

MI ComputSolutions Incorporated provides education and training in the London boroughs of Lambeth, Lewisham, Wandsworth and Merton. Most learners are adults who attend classes in the provider's centres in Brixton and Deptford. A small number of learners aged 16 and over are on traineeship programmes. At the time of the visit, there were 40 adult learners studying level 3 courses. They use the advanced learning loan to fund their studies. Around half of the learners are studying nursing and midwifery. Courses are provided in other areas, such as childcare, health and social care, information and communication technology, hairdressing and nail technology.

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 report that because of the pandemic, there has been a decline in the number of new learners starting courses. At the same time, leaders have increased their expenditure on the technologies they need to deliver training online. They have invested in additional safety measures at centres and to adapt the curriculum. For example, leaders have equipped a local community centre as a hairdressing and nail salon so that learners can develop their practical skills at a time when salons are closed.

Leaders and managers adapt the way subjects are taught after considering the views and circumstances of learners. For example, learners have a choice of attending classes at centres, learning from home or a mixture of both.

Leaders identify that the provision of work experience is a challenge because of reduced opportunities to take part in work experience. For example, some businesses have closed or furloughed their staff. Leaders and managers support learners to complete work experience remotely or at one of their own centres. Leaders continue to work with employers, colleges and universities to develop training and career pathways for learners. They have worked with a consortium of small businesses so that they can receive funding to provide work placements for learners.

Managers support and train tutors so that they develop the skills and knowledge they need to teach online. More competent tutors share their expertise with others who are less confident. Managers have assessed the skills of tutors and are developing a set of standards for online teaching. Tutors appreciate the support they receive from managers to help them improve their teaching online.

Managers have increased the frequency of their oversight of the quality of teaching and learning. They observe lessons online and check the quality of learners' work. Tutors say that subsequent feedback to them is helping them to improve their teaching and identify which learners need additional support.

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 ensure that learners who do not have access to a computer or laptop have one so that they can complete their course. Staff provide training for learners so that learners have the skills and knowledge they need to use a laptop and make the most of learning online. For some learners, using a laptop at home for the first time has helped reduce feelings of isolation during COVID-19 restrictions, as they are able to have more contact with their family and friends.

Many learners say that they could not complete their course if it were not online. Learners, particularly those who are employed, enjoy the changes that managers have made in the way courses are taught. For example, healthcare sector workers studying nursing and those with childcare responsibilities can access recorded classes, webcasts and podcasts at times that suit them.

Tutors work closely with awarding bodies to ensure that the curriculum meets any new requirements that have resulted from the pandemic. For example, in hairdressing, the assessment of learners' skills to cut and colour hair has been split. For safety reasons, learner's skills in colouring hair are assessed on site, whereas their cutting skills are assessed at home. New requirements, such as a qualification in infection prevention, have been incorporated into the training.

Tutors use a range of strategies to check that learners understand what they have learned through taking online classes. For example, tutors use quizzes and polls to check learners' understanding. This helps tutors to quickly understand where

learners need additional support and informs what content tutors will include in future online classes. If learners fall behind in their studies, they are provided with additional support to help them catch up. Learners value the individual support that they receive from tutors and say that this helps them stay on track with their learning.

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

Managers provide additional information to learners so that they can keep safe online. For example, they ensure that learners use secure passwords and know how to spot the signs of email scams. Learners say that they feel safe learning online and when they attend centres. They know whom to talk to if they do not feel safe.

Leaders, managers and staff have increased their focus on learners' welfare during the pandemic. Learners are required to have cameras turned on during online classes so that tutors can spot any changes in behaviour that may signal a welfare concern. At the start of classes, tutors take time to ask how learners feel at the start of each session.

Leaders and managers have taken action to ensure that learners and staff can attend centres safely. When staff and learners returned to the centres in July 2020, leaders and managers put in place new measures to ensure that the centres are safe places to learn and work. These include practising social distancing, regular sanitisation of work stations and the provision of masks to learners and staff.

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