

Cambian Lufton College

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	131921
Name of lead inspector:	Kathryn Rudd, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent specialist college
Address:	Lufton Yeovil Somerset BA22 8ST

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.

Information about the provider

Cambian Lufton College is an independent specialist college based in Somerset. It caters for students with learning disabilities, often coupled with autistic spectrum disorders, behavioural and emotional difficulties. The college offers residential and day provision for students between 16 and 25 years of age, including those who are based at the college for 52 weeks a year. The majority of students are residential and live in homes that are in, or close to, the college campus. Some students live in the nearby town.

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?

At the start of the pandemic, leaders planned for adjustments to face-to-face teaching in line with proposed government restrictions and the requirements of different student groups. Students who were based at the college for 52 weeks a year remained on site and learning took place in residential areas. Other students studied remotely and then returned to college at different times depending on their needs.

Leaders and families highlight how staff adapted the curriculum to provide practical learning opportunities for young people who struggled being in a classroom for long periods. During lockdown, staff worked together in teams focused around individual students. This consistency meant staff were able to jointly model positive behaviours and reinforce student's learning.

Leaders feel they have improved their communications with parents, which includes taking their parent forum online. Managers have appreciated leaders' regular communication, which they say reassured staff and students.

During lockdown, leaders built new learning and fitness facilities on site, including a gym and greenhouse. This helped students maintain their normal routines and develop their practical skills.

Some students have struggled to adjust back to college life and the new safety restrictions in place. This has led to an increase in low-level behavioural issues. Staff have been working with students to prepare them for these changes, using stories which use images and text to explore current social issues.

Students have continued to access independent careers and advocacy services. The careers adviser has provided virtual support via video calls. An advocate has been meeting with students face-to-face since September 2020.

After lockdown, leaders bought gazebos and hampers, enabling students who had remained on site to meet outside with their families and enjoy socially distanced picnics.

Leaders have valued their parent organisation's support during the pandemic. Group leaders bought technology equipment for staff working from home, supported site redevelopment and established meetings so college leaders could share good practice.

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?

Managers adapted their curriculum during lockdown, so students could continue to work towards their qualifications. For example, they changed subjects from animal care to car valeting, so students could more easily gain skills at home. Teachers helped students benefit from natural learning opportunities, such as developing their email skills when working remotely.

Staff created new learning opportunities, so students could continue to develop their practical skills. When external volunteering placements stopped, staff set up internal coaching placements for students with college sports teams. Teachers developed activities for students both on-and-off site, such as designing accessible walks around the college and in students' home areas.

Managers have built on existing arrangements to assure the quality of teaching, therapy and support. They monitor face-to-face and online learning sessions and talk with students to check what they have learned. Staff continue to monitor students' progress against the goals in their education, health and care plans. When students were working remotely, staff found that regular video conferencing calls helped them understand how students apply their personal skills at home, such as using the dishwasher.

Teachers value the feedback from staff and families supporting students' learning at home or in college residences. They used this to adapt their online teaching practices. Teachers now provide direct instruction online and give students homework to complete in their own time.

Staff share their online teaching experiences through staff meetings and gain from one-to-one support from managers. They also receive training in topics, such as the Mental Capacity Act, and take part in technology webinars hosted by their membership organisation.

Therapists support online sessions such as social communication groups, which students facilitate themselves. These help students improve their communication and digital skills.

Leaders recognise they have yet to ensure curriculum planning includes frequent reinforcing of key topics, such as online safety.

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

Senior leaders provided staff with weekly updates on changes to government guidance and how to apply these changes when students returned to college.

Staff have received training on the risks for learners that have arisen during the pandemic. Staff told us that they feel well prepared to deal with the changes as a result of COVID-19 and that the college has adapted well to the needs of students.

Leaders worked closely with external organisations and families to prepare for students' return to college. The therapy team worked with students to identify what they understood about the pandemic and how to best support them. Staff used clay models and videos to help explain changes to safety processes, such as hand washing arrangements.

All the students we spoke to understood who to go to if they had any concerns and could explain the new on-site safety arrangements.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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