

Coventry College

Interim visit report

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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

Coventry College is a large general further education college based across two campuses: Henley campus and City campus. At the time of the inspection, 2,809 learners were on education programmes for young people, 2,214 learners were on adult learning programmes, and 61 learners were in receipt of high-needs funding. There were 373 apprentices, of which around half are following apprenticeship standards-based programmes. Leaders offer courses in most subject areas, the largest being in English for speakers of other languages, health and care, business, and creative arts. Courses are offered from entry level to level 5, with around two thirds of the learners on study programmes at level 2 and below. The college works with one subcontractor, who delivers spectator safety qualifications.

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 first national lockdown, leaders identified that they were not prepared for the changes required. They worked to provide staff with the equipment and training they needed to teach remotely. Leaders identified that the majority of learners were in 'digital poverty', with limited access to the equipment they needed to access teaching. Leaders explained how they had invested in equipment to help learners to overcome this.

Leaders developed a communication procedure, 'Coventry Together', to ensure that staff and learners received the information they needed to access teaching and stay healthy. Staff have reflected on how the challenges faced in the pandemic had been difficult. They said that their resilience and team-working skills had improved.

Leaders discussed the ongoing challenges within the curriculum in relation to industry placements. Staff are seeking to overcome barriers to placements through the development of simulated work areas. Learners are undertaking virtual work experience with employers. For example, learners in construction are developing their understanding of the industry through remote experiences. They have taken part in opportunities to observe the building of a tower for the Coventry City of Culture developments.

Leaders identified the need to continue to provide careers education, information, advice and guidance. They moved open days to virtual events and provided support and advice remotely. Staff working to support apprenticeship recruitment carried out interviews online. Staff have worked with Jobcentre Plus teams to provide advice within local communities to support adults back into work.

Staff from the subcontracted provider talked about the support they had received from leaders at the college. They worked with leaders to plan changes to the curriculum. Staff were able to switch learners from supporting events to working in COVID-19 testing centres. They adapted the stewarding curriculum to focus on the development of learners' skills, such as in customer service and conflict management.

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?

Initially, teachers taught through a number of online platforms. Leaders worked with teachers to identify a suitable platform and to develop a set of digital protocols. Teachers talked about the development of resources to enable learners to develop their knowledge and skills.

Teachers reported that learners' attendance at remote teaching sessions improved during the first national lockdown. They put in place interventions and support for learners who were not attending. Leaders identified that some learners did not have the equipment to access remote learning. They provided learners with the equipment they needed.

Leaders and staff identified the different approaches required for teaching each learner group when planning the return to on-site teaching. Learners on programmes at level 2 and below were the first to return to face-to-face teaching sessions. Teachers initially taught a combination of remote and on-site sessions for learners on level 3 programmes. Most learners now access their teaching on site.

Leaders identified that many learners who started in September 2020 had gaps in their knowledge and skills. They extended the time given to support learners to settle into the college. Teachers ran subject-based, English and mathematics

assessments to identify learners' starting points. They used the information gained to plan the curriculum to meet learners' needs.

Leaders are continuing to review the curriculum. Teachers have brought forward practical skills activities and assessments within the year. They have modified assessments for vocational subjects. For example, teachers adapted assessment methods to include video recording and the use of blogs for learners on childcare programmes, to enable them to complete their programme.

Leaders talked about how they had continued to monitor the quality of teaching. They have reviewed the quality of teaching in face-to-face and remote sessions. Leaders have reviewed learners' feedback. They have used the feedback on the quality of teaching to inform curriculum planning.

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

Leaders explained how they identified learners who would need support during the pandemic. They increased the number of personal development and well-being coaches. Support teams worked with curriculum staff to maintain regular contact with learners.

Staff monitor vulnerable learners, for example those with education, health and care plans, and young asylum seekers. During the visit, inspectors talked to a small number of learners. They said, 'We have different coloured lanyards to show we are exempt from wearing masks. This means we are not challenged, which has a positive effect on our well-being'.

Learners have completed training to help them stay safe online. They talked about the safeguarding topics they had covered during induction and tutorials. They use this information to ask for help when they need it.

Leaders have strengthened partnership working. For example, they receive updates from the police on local concerns, such as increases in incidents of domestic violence and self-harm.

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