

Stoke-on-Trent College

Progress monitoring report

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Address:	Cauldon Campus Stoke Road Shelton Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire ST4 2DG

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Stoke-on-Trent College was last inspected in October 2019. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

This monitoring visit focused on the extent to which leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances. It was undertaken as outlined in the [operational note on visits carried out from January 2021](#) and with reference to the further education and skills handbook.

These visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners in this period, including those with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, inspectors carried out this monitoring activity remotely. As a result, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would be the case during an on-site inspection. Therefore, this report provides a more limited level of assurance.

The impact of COVID-19 has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgement below. Inspectors did not evaluate leaders' response to COVID-19 during the spring and summer of 2020, when the provider was not open to all learners and there were no national expectations regarding remote education.

Theme

What progress are leaders and those responsible for governance making to ensure that staff teach a curriculum and provide support to meet learners' needs, including the provision of remote/online learning?

Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection senior leaders have raised the expectations that they set for teachers. Staff are well supported through a range of targeted professional development programmes. For example, teachers are engaging better those learners who may previously have been disengaged from their learning. In some areas, such as business and motor vehicle, learners are more focused on their learning and the progress they are making.

Senior leaders have improved the curriculum planning process. Curriculum leaders use a wider range of useful information to select content to prepare learners better,

and provide them with the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for their next steps. For example, curriculum leaders use information on local skills shortages and analyse information on potential areas of job growth in the future. However, teachers should consider more carefully how they then order this content so that learners build their knowledge and skills over time. In some areas, for example business, it is not clear how particular knowledge and skills are taught, and how assessment is used to check learning. Learners are sometimes asked to complete assessment on knowledge they have not yet been taught.

The governance function has been strengthened. New board members have been appointed with additional skills and expertise. Governors receive more detailed information. They use this information to challenge senior leaders to improve. For example, governors receive information on a new progress tracker. This allows them to challenge senior leaders on the steps they are taking to support those learners identified as being at risk of falling behind due to the level of progress they are making.

Senior leaders have not yet taken sufficient steps to improve the quality of apprenticeships. For example, in engineering it is not clear what knowledge, skills and behaviours apprentices need to improve. Teachers do not clearly identify the starting points of apprentices. They do not set individual curricular goals for apprentices and as a result, apprentices do not know what they need to do to improve their knowledge, skills and behaviours. On-the-job and off-the-job training are not always coordinated so that apprentices can put into practice the theoretical knowledge they have gained.

Leaders have managed well the move to safe online learning. They have invested in a new virtual learning environment. Teachers have received extensive training in how best to use this. In areas such as business and motor vehicle, teachers use this resource to upload a range of detailed videos. These videos are supporting learners to continue to develop their practical skills while learning remotely. For example, in business, teachers have developed scripted role-play videos around customer service. These have replaced employer engagement opportunities that cannot currently take place due to the pandemic. This is helping learners to develop their customer service skills.

For those learners accessing provision on site, leaders have ensured that they continue to receive the support they need. For example, for those learners who have high needs, learning support assistants continue to provide in-class support. Leaders have continued to work with the local authority to support those learners to work towards their individual targets within their education, health and care plans. More recently, senior leaders have invited more learners to access on-site learning. This includes those learners who are not able to access online learning. There has been significant increase in the number of learners now accessing face-to-face teaching.

Senior leaders have ensured that learners are well supported when working remotely. For example, learners are still able to access counselling support. A range of interactive enrichment activities has been moved online to support learners with their well-being. Learners have continued to access careers information, advice, and guidance. For example, learners have been able to speak to universities through online open days,

which has supported them to be clear on their next steps. However, within engineering apprenticeships apprentices do not receive careers advice and guidance. As a result, apprentices are not clear on the range of next steps available to them.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- increase rapidly the quality of apprenticeship provision, so that it is clear what apprentices need to learn, based on their starting points
- ensure that teachers carefully consider the order in which they teach the content of their course, so that learners can build their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time
- make sure that all learners and apprentices have access to careers advice, and guidance, so that they know the full range of next steps available to them.

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