

Cornwall College

Progress monitoring report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Cornwall College was last inspected in May 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?

Significant progress

A new leadership team was appointed in October 2019. They have made significant progress in remedying the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.

Leaders have systematically reviewed the college curriculum, checking with partners that it now meets the needs of learners and local employment opportunities. Each subject lead has assessed their curricular objectives and carefully considered how best to sequence learning and assessment.

Leaders have high expectations and have restructured staff roles and responsibilities to provide a 'clear line of sight' from the senior team to the learner. As a result, staff

now have more ownership of their curriculum area and are clear about leaders' aspirations for themselves and their learners.

Leaders have developed new quality assurance systems, which are firmly focused on the curriculum and learners' experiences. Senior leaders review courses in detail with staff four times a year. They focus on individual learners and how they can best achieve their goals.

Leaders have significantly invested in improving staff skills, including funding teaching qualifications for all staff, and recruiting specialist teaching coaches and industry specialists. Staff value their professional development and recognise the positive impact it has had on their teaching.

Governors confidently evidence the 'step change' in governance over the last 18 months. They now challenge leaders using robust data and first-hand evidence from meetings with learners and staff. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and the actions taken by leaders to tackle them.

Leaders have ensured that areas identified as a weakness at the previous inspection, such as the provision for learners with high needs and English and mathematics, have benefited from significant cross-college support to help them improve. All staff have received training on how best to support learners with high needs, and as a result feel more confident and now work more inclusively.

Managers have made a number of improvements to the English and mathematics curriculum, including aligning more closely with subject areas, which helps learners better understand and remember the content. Leaders have shared teaching resources, allowing staff to use their time more productively to tailor learning to meet individual needs.

Managers have restructured foundation programmes for learners who have high needs to focus appropriately on developing learners' independence and skills for work. Staff use learners' starting points well to design individual learning programmes. Although learners with high needs studying on level 2 and 3 programmes were positive about the support they received, leaders rightly recognise that there is more work to do to reduce gaps in progress between learners who have additional support and their peers.

The majority of learners were able to explain to inspectors the new skills, knowledge and behaviours they have gained. Learners studying on entry level 2 programmes explained how they practise speaking and listening skills through sharing their learning with peers.

The majority of learners said that they were able to understand more as a result of the feedback they received from staff. For example, plumbing apprentices improved their written risk assessment statements as a result of detailed feedback at each iteration.

Leaders decided to change the planned curriculum to teach practical skills face-to-face before lockdown came into place. This ensured that learners developed relationships with staff and their peers before they moved to remote learning. Staff have developed innovative approaches to teach practical sessions online. Tutors in agricultural engineering have used multiple cameras in online lessons to provide learners with a more realistic learning experience. They have introduced live demonstrations, which include dismantling a hydraulic ram.

A small number of learners who have high needs, or who cannot work remotely, are continuing to learn on site. These learners work alongside their peers attending online. They are also able to participate in practical vocational teaching, such as in catering, construction and art. Learners who have high needs who access teaching remotely do this online, using paper-based resources or both.

Staff work collaboratively to identify learners who have barriers to learning and put in place support where required. They have adapted effective practice from face-to-face sessions to use remotely. For example, learning support practitioners contact learners before their lessons begin, to check if they have had breakfast and understand the day's timetable.

Staff are acutely aware of the potential negative impact of the pandemic on their learners. To counteract learners' concerns about the lack of future employment options, employers presented them with a keynote speech, 'The future isn't cancelled', at the virtual careers week. Staff support a range of learner-led initiatives designed to combat loneliness and isolation. These include jamming, yoga and cookery demonstrations.

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

- assure that improvements made to ensure that all learners experience a high quality, ambitious curriculum, are consistent across all subject areas
- support learners who have high needs on study programmes to achieve at least at the same level as their peers.

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