

City Gateway

Progress monitoring report

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Name of lead inspector:	Peter Nelson, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	Import Buildings 2 Clove Crescent Poplar E14 2BE

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

City Gateway was last inspected in February 2020. 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

Leaders and trustees have made positive progress in addressing the main weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. They have also adapted teaching methods well during the COVID-19 restrictions to help ensure that learners are able to continue their learning using a mix of online and face-to-face teaching.

Since the inspection, managers have improved processes for reviewing, tracking, monitoring and recording the progress of apprentices, which are accurate, detailed and informative. A recently appointed apprenticeship assessor has also strengthened communications with the apprentices' employers, who are now aware of the

progress that the apprentices make. In discussion with the assessor, employers ensure that apprentices have opportunities to develop timely knowledge, skills and behaviours in the workplace.

Leaders are rightly cautious not to recruit and expand the apprenticeship programme until they are sure that the improvements they have introduced are sustainable, and will scale-up, should they have more apprentices.

Trustees have successfully reviewed and expanded the membership and skillset of the board. Trustees have received training to help them improve the impact of their work. As a result, they are more confident and provide better support and challenge to senior leaders.

Leaders have strengthened their partnerships with employers. This has had several benefits. For example, they have designed an innovative work placement scheme in partnership with the employers to operate during the COVID-19 restrictions. Employers have also supported leaders to create a realistic office environment where trainees can participate in their online placements, when they are unable to attend employers' premises, due to the restrictions.

Assessors and teachers have established high expectations of learners when submitting written work. They also provide insightful, informative and consistently high-quality feedback to learners. This allows learners to identify areas for improvement and improve the quality of their work.

Staff teach trainees and apprentices relevant new knowledge, and create additional work-related opportunities for them during their placements. For example, trainees on media placements work alongside professionals in editorial, commercial and art roles to broaden their insight and experience of magazine production. This helps them develop a secure understanding of job opportunities within the media industry.

Apprentices and trainees receive good support from staff. When they apply to join a course, they receive clear guidance to assess their suitability and to help teachers evaluate their starting points regarding their self-awareness, confidence and resilience. While on their course, they receive appropriate pastoral support to assist them with personal issues where necessary. Staff support learners to understand the factors that can cause stress or have an adverse effect on their well-being during the period of restrictions. Staff are aware of any learners who might struggle academically or emotionally as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Trainees receive good support from coaches to develop their job search and employability skills. Many apprentices and trainees also have a professional mentor as well as their teacher/assessor. These mentors provide effective support to help learners develop their skills, for example by supporting trainees to prepare and apply for jobs. In the current climate it is proving very difficult for those learners who complete their traineeships to find suitable employment in their chosen fields. However, once learners complete their traineeships, coaches provide ongoing

support for up to six months after they have completed their programme, to assist them to find suitable employment or education.

Learners feel confident and safe. They recognise and appreciate the thorough support they receive from staff. They are clear who they should contact if they require additional support with academic or personal matters.

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

- ensure that they have effective processes in place to monitor and record apprentices' progress to allow them to maintain an accurate oversight of the provision as they expand and diversify the apprenticeship programme
- strengthen further their links with employers, apprenticeship and training providers to help improve progression pathways for trainees once they complete their programme.

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