

# Runshaw College

Interim visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 130741

**Name of lead inspector:** Alastair Mollon HMI

**Visit dates:** 7–8 October 2020

**Type of provider:** General further education college

**Address:** Langdale Road  
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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 students and apprentices in this period, including learners with high needs and those with special educational needs and disabilities. We intend to return to routine inspection in January 2021 but will keep the exact timing under review.

The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below and the findings are based on discussions with leaders, managers, staff and students.

### Information about the provider

Runshaw College is a tertiary college situated in the area of South Ribble and Chorley, Lancashire. The college operates across two main sites: a sixth-form centre in Leyland and a largely adult campus in Chorley. The Chorley campus also offers apprenticeships, higher education (HE) courses and a science and engineering curriculum for students aged 16 to 18. The area experiences low levels of unemployment but also has pockets of deprivation.

The college has approximately 5,800 students enrolled on courses from entry level to degree level. Around 5,000 students are enrolled on education programmes for young people, of which 4,500 follow an A level or advanced level 3 vocational programme. There are just over 500 students on adult and HE programmes and 325 apprentices who study between level 2 and level 5. Fifty-two students are in receipt of high needs funding. At the time of the visit, the college did not work with any subcontractors.

### **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?**

Leaders and managers have retained broadly the same curriculum as in the previous academic year. They feel that staff have experienced a steep learning curve from March to June. Following extensive staff training, they have designed learning materials that can be accessed online. Curriculum managers say that senior leaders provided effective guidance while allowing them the freedom to design innovative learning resources that will benefit students and apprentices. Staff have created a library of online materials in a range of subjects that students and apprentices use to learn when they are not able to attend college.

Leaders feel that staff have appropriately adapted the curriculum to reflect new attendance patterns. For example, students studying dance have focused on developing their essay writing skills and theoretical knowledge as access to the dance studio has been limited due to social distancing. Students on vocational programmes have had work experience moved from term one to term three and the teaching of preparation for employment has been brought forward. Leaders are working to ensure that students can experience the practical aspects of their programmes and increase the opportunities for A-level students to attend on-site lessons. They recognise that while teachers are very supportive, students feel less motivated to work in isolation at home.

Employers feel that the pandemic has had a minimal impact on their apprentices' curriculum. However, the move to online learning has been a significant change to how their apprentices learn. Employers said that college tutors swiftly adapted the curriculum to online delivery and were flexible in meeting the needs of apprentices, especially those who were furloughed. Apprentices have received extensive support around the effect of social isolation and strategies to support mental health. Employers feel that college staff have gone 'above and beyond' to meet their apprentices' needs.

### **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?**

Leaders feel that they have made positive adaptations to their previous quality systems as a result of the changes implemented due to COVID-19 restrictions. They review on-site lessons, online 'live' lessons, online remote lessons and the resources used in each of these to ensure that students and apprentices continue to develop their knowledge and skills.

Teachers say that they continually review and develop curriculum content and the order in which they teach topics. They want to ensure that the 'remote curriculum' is stimulating and engaging. Teachers have adopted new learning technologies and social media to motivate students. They feel that students and apprentices are progressing through the curriculum at a faster pace and the quality of students' work has improved. Teachers have introduced frequent tests to give students who have never experienced public examinations practice of working in exam conditions.

Teachers feel that they have improved assessment practice. They use students' and apprentices' assessment results to identify any gaps in knowledge and adapt the curriculum to include this learning. For example, in mathematics, teachers have developed a range of five-minute 'how to...' videos helping students improve their knowledge of key topics such as algebra.

Leaders and managers told us about the positive changes the pandemic has brought that they will keep in future. For example, teachers and trainers describe how they use

technology to provide timely feedback to students and apprentices. Trainers explained how they feel more able to support apprentices through online learning.

Leaders continue to provide students and apprentices with access to careers education using online events. They say that students, parents and carers have used these careers and HE events to help with choices about their future. Leaders state that they include advice about course choices and raising students' awareness about university life.

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

Leaders are proactively supporting students with wraparound support services, including providing food parcels and physical checks for the most vulnerable students. They provided safety awareness sessions for staff and students to ensure that they could return to work and learning with confidence.

Teachers maintained regular support and contact with students throughout the period of COVID-19 restrictions. The student support team provided remote transition support and a bridging programme for students moving to the college in September.

Teachers identified increasing cases of students with social anxiety and mental health issues since the start of the pandemic. They have delivered a three-week tutorial programme of mental health and resilience training for students. Students and apprentices told us that they feel safe in college and at work and that they have had more calls checking on their welfare from pastoral staff.

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