

Hampshire Achieves

Interim visit report

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Type of provider: Local authority

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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 (SEND).

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 learners.

Information about the provider

Hampshire Achieves is part of Hampshire County Council and is based in Winchester. Most learners are adults taking mainly non-accredited community learning courses. Courses take place at a wide variety of venues throughout Hampshire and most are provided by subcontractors. Programmes for adults include mathematics, English, languages, information technology, art, dance, and well-being courses. The service also offers traineeships, internships and apprenticeships in business, education, early years and health and care. At the time of visit, around 530 learners were enrolled with the provider. Of these, around 100 were apprentices and 72 were trainees or interns.

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 described how they had swiftly changed their teaching methods from face-to-face to online to support their learners during the pandemic. They arranged digital skills training for staff and learners during a two-week period prior to lockdown to help them adapt to learning remotely. Leaders had to postpone some community learning classes for a short period while tutors adapted their resources. They explained how tutors created workbooks and delivered them to learners with no access to suitable equipment.

Leaders and managers told us how most learners and apprentices were able to adapt to online learning. Where a small number of vulnerable learners were not able to, staff delivered appropriate resources to them. They complemented these with phone calls to learners and parents to support them with their studies.

Managers described their concerns about the mental health of some learners. Managers made significant adjustments to pastoral support and redeveloped the curriculum to include topics about mental health, well-being and resilience. Managers were pleased with the support they provided for learners with SEND. Staff worked on a one-to-one basis with these learners, offering emotional support to manage anxiety.

Managers adapted the courses they offered because of the pandemic. They worked closely with subcontractors and employers to establish, and provide for, the support needs of local communities. Examples of new courses offered are mental-health courses, transition-out-of-lockdown courses, well-being at home, digital technology and poetry for well-being.

Leaders and managers explained that none of their apprentices had been furloughed and that they were able to continue their programmes. Most apprentices remained in work either from home, supported by their managers, or on site in care establishments. Staff were able to monitor the progress of apprentices and identify any support needed remotely.

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?

Staff spoke about the steps they took to make sure learners were able to continue their learning. They worked with support workers to ensure that homeless learners received teaching resources and useful feedback and continued to make progress. Managers of learners on traineeships described the introduction of virtual work experience for trainees. They shared an example of how trainees worked virtually at a local veterinary charity, learning about animal care. Other trainees participated in virtual work experience with construction companies, which linked to their future career aims. Managers of traineeships altered the sequence of learning so that work experience begins later in the programme to give them time to re-establish links with employers.

Leaders described the training and support which staff received to help them adapt to online teaching. Staff appreciated the training, which included a range of topics such as basic information technology, use of learning applications and psychological first aid. As a result, they feel confident and prepared to return to remote teaching in the event of a second lockdown. Leaders reviewed the quality of teaching throughout the pandemic. They completed virtual learning walks to be able to support staff and offer training where needed.

Managers explained how remote learning has benefited some learners. They described how this new approach had given learners and staff greater confidence in working with technology and had helped them develop independent study skills.

Managers and staff commented on learners' improved attendance and participation in lessons. They described how they made sure that learners were not disadvantaged by the pandemic but were able to make good progress in their courses. Managers felt that learners valued the support they received from staff. They explained how they had continued to provide careers information advice and guidance to help learners with their next steps.

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

Leaders and managers described how they made sure that all staff and learners knew what to do if they had any safeguarding concerns. They gave additional training about keeping safe to learners and staff prior to national COVID-19 restrictions. For learners on supported internships, staff used weekly lessons to reinforce messages about staying safe.

During the pandemic, managers have adapted their safeguarding training resources for learners to give them information about online safety, safe use of social media, how to spot fake news, grooming and radicalisation.

Leaders have continued to complete safeguarding training. They attended remote 'Prevent' duty training and regional events and online training to make sure they could keep staff and learners updated with current regional concerns.

Leaders explained how they have supported learners' well-being throughout the pandemic. They described the frequent welfare calls that they had made to learners, including those identified as vulnerable, during the lockdown period.

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