

Brogdale Community Interest Company

Interim visit report

Unique reference number: 130725

Name of lead inspector: Emma Barrett-Peel, Her Majesty's Inspector

Visit dates: 24 to 25 November 2020

Type of provider: Independent specialist college

Address: Culnells Farm
School Lane
Iwade
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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 in this period, including those with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or 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 learners.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, we made this visit remotely to reduce pressure on the provider.

Information about the provider

Brogdale Community Interest Company (Brogdale CIC) is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It is located in Kent. It provides pre-apprenticeship education and training for young people who have not been in education for several years because of exclusions and/or complex mental health needs. It was registered as an independent specialist college in 2017.

The college comprises six rural sites located in three towns in Kent: Faversham, Ashford and Sittingbourne. At the time of the visit, there were 51 students studying vocational qualifications from entry level to level 2. Students study from a range of subjects, including horticulture, creative craft, food and cookery, farm animal care, and environmental and conservation skills.

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 explained the steps they took during COVID-19 restrictions to support students. They talked about the difficulties of helping students who could not attend college to develop practical skills. Leaders told us how they had concentrated on improving these students' theoretical knowledge.

Leaders spoke about how they changed their plans to expand the number of students coming to college because of the pandemic. They talked about how they

had reduced class sizes to allow for any further restrictions in teaching. They spoke about the alterations that they had made to the content of the curriculum as a result of the pandemic. They explained how the practical nature of many of the subjects that learners studied enabled staff to teach outdoors.

Employers talked about the benefits that work-experience placements brought to learners, such as improving their self-confidence and helping them to learn and develop practical skills. They explained how students' placements had been affected by the pandemic. For example, one student had not been able to return to a work-experience placement because the business has been unable to resume standard working practices. Another student had to take a break from a placement due to having to self-isolate.

Leaders shared their concerns about future employment opportunities for students, particularly in areas such as hospitality and catering. They explained how they had increased the frequency of conversations with students about their next steps and alternative employment opportunities. Leaders and managers explained the additions they had made to their social business placements for students in response to the reduction in employment opportunities. New placements include opportunities for students in a community garden scheme, floristry and on a chaperone walking scheme.

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 explained the quick actions they took to support students who could not come into college at the start of the pandemic. They loaned students laptops and gave them college email accounts to enable them to communicate safely with staff. Teachers sent art packs and recipes to students studying craft and hospitality subjects so they could continue practical work at home. Teachers provided paper-based resources for students who could not work online.

Leaders spoke proudly about students' increased motivation to learn despite the challenges of the pandemic. They explained how creative staff and students had been in providing evidence of practical work. For example, students studying horticulture worked in their own or neighbours' gardens and sent teachers photographs of what they had achieved.

Leaders explained how a few students had found attendance and participation in lessons a challenge. Some students were anxious about learning remotely or attending lessons. Students we spoke to were very pleased to be back at college. Leaders recognised that some students' progress had been impeded, particularly in the development of their mathematical skills. They explained the changes they had made to the curriculum, which they felt would help students catch up quickly.

Staff told us how they had identified students' gaps in knowledge, particularly around the development of practical skills. Teachers helped students to re-visit and improve these skills. For example, teachers worked with students studying horticulture to make sure they could work safely with equipment or machinery.

Students explained that they felt more confident about working remotely and using online resources. Leaders told us how they had helped staff to develop their skills to teach online and work with students remotely. Staff explained how their daily welfare checks with students helped them understand and provide for students' individual needs and check their progress and well-being.

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

Leaders explained how they had worked with staff and students to make sure remote learning was safe. For example, video calls to students always included two members of staff. Leaders talked about how they had created a guide for learners that included frequently asked questions about staying safe. Students told us that these guides helped them feel less anxious about their return to college. Teachers worked with students to create their own guides to help them stay safe online.

Students we talked to felt safe at college. They knew how to report concerns and stay safe when working remotely or online. They told us that teachers continued to re-visit online safety in their lessons. Students told us about the videos staff had made that helped them understand how to stay safe in college.

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