

Chadsgrove Educational Trust Learning Centre

Interim visit report

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Type of provider: Independent Specialist College

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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. 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

Chadsgrove Special School secured funding in 2016 from Worcestershire local authority to open the Chadsgrove Educational Trust Learning Centre. The centre opened to offer provision for young people aged 19 to 25 with a physical disability and/or complex medical need. In 2017, the centre became a registered company and charity, having secured a contract from the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

The centre is based in Bromsgrove and provides programmes for learners who live in Worcestershire. There are currently 12 learners on programme. All learners are aged over 19. Students work at pre-entry level to entry level 1.

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?

At the beginning of lockdown leaders put in place strategies to support the transition to learning from home, including the supply of specialist therapy equipment. Managers recognised the need to change the initial paper-based learning methods, developing a more visual, online approach to support learners' engagement.

Lead teachers told us that they received clear guidance from leaders about the direction of the curriculum from September and were supported with planning. The curriculum was adapted from September to support the return of learners from lockdown to a 'recovery curriculum', adjusting the teaching to re-establish relationships, and focusing on health and well-being.

Teachers and support staff were supported with their own personal circumstances during lockdown and were allowed flexibility to manage their work around these. Managers have enabled staff to benefit from a wide range of training, including a

webinar training event on how to deliver effective and safe online sessions by Natspec, and training on using technology.

Parents highlighted how well the college communicated with them and maintained contact, which they felt was valuable during lockdown. For example, the continued face-to-face delivery of college meal vouchers allowed parents an opportunity to share any concerns. Speech and language therapists and physical therapists described how teachers and support staff were proactive in implementing techniques to support therapies during lockdown, reducing physical deterioration and helping learners to engage in the 'lockdown curriculum'.

Working closely with regional partners, leaders say they are continuing to raise concerns about ensuring all learners in the region will have access to their entitlement. They are concerned that the impact of lockdown and access to transition activities will mean learners need to remain in college for longer than originally anticipated, creating funding and capacity issues.

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?

Managers state that the pandemic has had a significant impact on their curriculum. They have not been able to access outreach, work-related and health support and therefore have devised a programme that gives learners structure and routine during lessons.

Lead teachers are allocated specific topics and activities to provide individualised sessions to learners. They plan and teach their sessions and have weekly meetings to discuss progress and the effectiveness of sessions. Managers check learners' progress by triangulating evidence from individual learning plans.

Managers and teachers have had to adapt significant parts of the curriculum because of site restrictions linked to the pandemic, removing access to some health-related facilities such as the hydrotherapy pool. Learners were not able to undertake community-based activities and work-related skills in the community, such as working at the café at the Baptist church.

Managers say that one of the challenges with developing online learning was supporting parents to use the technologies, and as a result 60% of learners were able to access the materials with help from their parents. Managers are now planning to ensure that all parents can use the technology to help learners continue with their learning and maintain their social relationships.

For those parents and learners who can use the technology, managers have enabled them to send in photos and videos of learners' work and other evidence of how they have developed their independent living skills. Activities include videos for learners to

both watch and participate in, and online lessons to meet and share experiences with teachers and their classmates.

Managers say they have found that some learners have not been affected. A few have reduced physical mobility; many remember what they have learned previously, but this varies considerably among learners. A very few learners had become withdrawn and have now begun to re-engage.

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

Leaders worked closely with the safeguarding lead from the local authority and attended daily meetings to discuss issues and strategies with other similar providers. The information was disseminated during daily briefings with the college team to discuss and plan ways of meeting the individual needs of learners.

Teachers amended learners' risk assessments and discussed these with parents to formalise individual support plans to ensure learners stay safe and continue learning. These risk assessments were updated in preparation for transition in September, including Public Health England requirements.

Leaders and staff identified the key risks with learners with multiple/complex health issues. These included families who could not go shopping or did not have equipment to keep healthy. Leaders arranged for staff to deliver food parcels, medication, and resources to help learners stay healthy. They also devised videos to help families to use specific equipment such as standers. Speech and language therapists provided activities to help learners continue to develop their communication skills and understanding of how to stay safe at home and online.

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