

College Progress Visit Report

South Lanarkshire College

November 2019

College Principal	Stewart McKillop
Progress Visit Date	6-7 November 2019
College Nominee	Angus Allan
Managing Inspector	Gill Ritchie
College HMI	Andrew Brawley
SFC Outcome Agreement Manager	Kathryn O’Loan
Outcome of Progress Visit	Satisfactory progress

Background and context

The college and its context

South Lanarkshire College is a high performing college based in East Kilbride, which is an area of significant population growth and increasing demand for college education. Since the publication of its last Evaluation Report and Enhancement Plan (EREP), the college has grown in terms of both its fundable activity and number of learners. In 2018-19 the college's attainment rates have improved by around 3% overall. A key feature of the college's successful approach is investment in its staff and the college has recently been re-accredited by Investors in People at Platinum level, the only college in Scotland to have achieved this. The college is financially stable and this financial stability has supported significant investment in learning resources. Alongside growth in learner numbers, the college has also increased staff numbers, and now employs over 360 people. It has developed further its links with employers, including guaranteed interviews for learners on a range of programmes. These strong links with employers support the delivery of over 500 apprenticeship places per year. In 2019 the college also launched its new Strategic Framework outlining its three priorities for the next five years: 'Successful Students', 'Highest Quality Education and Support' and 'Sustainable Behaviours'.

Purpose of the progress visit

In 2018, all colleges produced an EREP which were endorsed by Education Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). During Progress Visits (PVs) colleges demonstrate how well they are delivering on the targets and milestones identified in their Enhancement Plans (EPs). The visits allow colleges opportunities to outline any changes to their circumstances resulting in revisions to their original objectives. PVs provide reassurance to key stakeholders on the effectiveness of improvement actions undertaken by individual colleges. Whilst undertaking PVs, HM Inspectors of Education take account of the context and individual nature of each college.

Overall judgement regarding progress

At the end of the PV, HM Inspectors of Education, Associate Assessors and Student Team Members review the evidence gathered during their discussions with college managers, staff, learners and stakeholders. They assess the progress that colleges have made against their EPs, taking account of any changes to local circumstances. Based on this evidence, the team will form a view as to whether the college has made satisfactory progress against its EP or has not made satisfactory progress against its EP. This outcome is contained within this report with accompanying commentary to support the findings.

The endorsed EREP for South Lanarkshire College can be found at:
<https://education.gov.scot/media/pc0llciy/southlancollegehgioc.pdf>

There are five strategic actions identified by the college in its current EP. The college has aligned these actions with the quality indicators (QIs) in the quality improvement framework for Scotland's colleges: How good is our college?. A number of the actions are relevant to more than one QI. South Lanarkshire College has made progress on all five strategic actions.

Findings from the progress visit

Outcomes and impact

The following relates to EP actions 1 and 2.

Areas of positive progress

- South Lanarkshire College has in place a range of approaches to reduce gender imbalance within the curriculum. The college's supportive and inclusive culture and gender action plan supports staff well to adopt inclusive practice. This is encouraging increasing numbers of learners to follow non-traditional career pathways and the college has made good progress towards achievement of its gender balance targets.
- The use of well-designed marketing materials, gender neutral language, and ongoing career-long professional learning (CLPL) for staff, promotes gender equality and empowers staff to address any barriers that may limit access to programmes. For example, in built environment the numbers of female learners accessing technician level programmes in quantity surveying and construction management has increased significantly.
- Although the number of male learners on childcare programmes remains relatively low, they are improving year-on-year. Access to college-delivered Foundation Apprenticeships is helping to encourage school leavers to enter full-time programmes in this area. College staff engage well with local employers to encourage male learners to access apprenticeship provision as part of the national child care expansion strategy. The college has made good progress towards achievement of its gender balance targets.
- Robust arrangements to monitor the performance of curriculum areas are used well by managers and staff. All staff have very good access to real-time performance information which they use well to identify issues of concern and make appropriate responses. The Academic Board and Quality Enhancement Group (QEG) undertake regular careful analysis

of data to identify programmes that are performing well, and those where performance falls below college-devised targets.

- Through the college's 'special measures' arrangements, individual programmes that do not meet college targets for retention and attainment are given additional focus to support improvement. These arrangements are viewed positively by staff and are leading to improved retention and attainment rates for learners. For example, in level 6 hairdressing the attainment rate has improved by 29 percentage points (61% to 90%) as a result of an enhanced staff focus on delivery approaches and adjustments made to provision to better meet the needs of learners.

Areas of further progress and actions required

- None identified.

Delivery of learning and services to support learning

The following relates to EP actions 3 and 4.

Areas of positive progress

- The college has in place comprehensive and systematic arrangements for the identification of learner support needs. All learners are interviewed prior to receiving the offer of a place at college and are encouraged at this stage to disclose any additional support needs.
- All teaching staff are aware of the range of support services available to learners. Effective and efficient communication between support and teaching staff facilitates early referral for learners who require bespoke pastoral care or additional support for aspects of their learning. The college support base is accessible for learners throughout the college day and is a welcoming environment that meets the needs of learners well.
- Support staff work closely with their colleagues in all teaching faculties to support learners to succeed. Detailed analysis of data is helping staff to identify learner groups or individuals who are most likely to require additional help to sustain their studies. This is leading to improvements in retention and attainment rates across all modes of attendance and levels of provision. In particular, the college has worked hard to address the potential attainment gap for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. College data for AY 2018/19, indicates that the attainment rates for learners from the ten most deprived postcode areas (SIMD10) are in line with or better than their peers across almost all levels and modes of attendance.
- All staff make every effort to support learners to achieve and attain. Staff understand their role in signposting learners who are in need of support to the most appropriate service. Guidance tutors meet regularly with learners to provide pastoral help and advice. Where required, they encourage learners to make use of additional pastoral and academic support, including referral to the college counselling service which is providing invaluable help for learners experiencing emotional or mental health issues. These interventions are supporting learners well to sustain their learning and complete programmes successfully. A number would otherwise have withdrawn from their programme.

- The college has in place a British Sign Language (BSL) action plan which aligns well with the associated Scottish Government strategy and action plan. The plan is monitored regularly by the college's Equalities Committee. Learners who are deaf or hearing impaired, are consulted regularly on the support arrangements available and how well they meet learner need. Feedback provided is used well by staff to make adjustments to services.
- Learners who are profoundly deaf or hearing impaired make good progress in their learning and are achieving and attaining well as a result of the support provided by the college, including the provision of BSL interpreters and note-taking. Carefully planned pastoral support, including ensuring that their peer group are made aware of their needs, is helping to reduce social isolation and encourages integration of deaf learners into the wider aspects of college life.
- The college has a growing reputation as a result of the success of its carefully planned support arrangements and is experiencing an increase in the number of learners who are deaf or hearing impaired.

Areas of further progress and actions required

- None identified.

Leadership and quality culture

The following relates to EP action 5.

Areas of positive progress

- College staff are keen to develop their practice and learn from the highly effective practice of other colleges both nationally and internationally. Staff regularly share their practice with colleagues across Scotland through a variety of projects and initiatives. This is helping staff to make adjustments based on the practice of others.

Areas of further progress and actions required

- None identified.

What happens next?

The progress visit report will be shared with SFC, the college Board (and in multi-college regions, the Regional Strategic Body). The outcomes of the PV will inform a refreshed Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan (2020-23) due to be submitted by all colleges in October 2020.

Gill Ritchie
HM Inspector