

20 February 2024

Mr Christopher Moore  
Principal  
New College Lanarkshire

Dear Mr Moore

A team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited New College Lanarkshire in December 2023 to undertake an Annual Engagement Visit. During our visit, we talked to learners, staff and stakeholders, and worked closely with the senior managers.

The team found the following major strengths in the college's work:

### **Learner progress and outcomes**

Provisional data for academic year 2022-23 indicates an improvement in learner successful completion rates for all full-time further and higher education (FE and HE) and most part-time FE programmes. For some subject areas, for example construction, hospitality, performing arts, special programmes, and sport and leisure, successful completion rates are above sector norms. Where successful completion rates are, college managers work collaboratively with staff and colleagues across the sector to identify actions to support improvement.

College managers and curriculum teams engage with local industry partners to embed meta skills within the curriculum and support learners' progression and career pathways. College staff offer a wide range of services to ensure learners have access to the most appropriate support. Learners with protected characteristics are identified early in the recruitment process to ensure that appropriate interventions and support are in place when they start their programme. Early indications are that this approach is beginning to impact positively on full-time learner retention and attainment.

College managers work collaboratively with learners and staff to develop awareness of the social barriers and challenges facing learners. Initiatives to build learner resilience and support improvement in the learner experience have been introduced as a result. An innovative Artificial Intelligence system is in place to identify learners at risk of withdrawal. This supports staff in implementing interventions to learners at risk of withdrawal to remain on the programme. Most college staff and class representatives have undergone training to ensure a common understanding of mental health issues and awareness of positive approaches to support those who may be experiencing difficulties.

## **Approaches to assuring and enhancing the quality of learning and teaching including professional updating**

The college provides opportunities for staff to engage in professional dialogue to help them to enhance their learning and teaching. An innovative professional learning programme has been introduced to support staff to develop and improve their teaching approaches. Recent appointments to learning, teaching, and innovation leadership roles are helping to take forward the college's strategic priorities for improvement in learning and teaching. All line managers have undergone training to better support staff members during professional discussions. Teaching staff participate in 'teaching squares' to observe each other's teaching and engage in professional discussions. This collaborative approach helps improve learning and teaching approaches and inform improvements in the learning experience.

Managers have developed well-considered arrangements for ensuring consistent and robust evaluation of the learner experience. Learner views are taken account of during self-evaluation and learners have opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions with staff. Academic leads meet regularly to discuss themes arising from quality assurance arrangements and agree actions for improvement.

### **Learner Engagement**

Learners have a range of opportunities to identify any specific support needs they may have. The college ensures that all learners feel safe, welcome, and part of a community. They encourage learners to provide feedback to tutors on their experiences regularly to support the monitoring of academic and personal progress. Class representatives help improve the learning experience, and staff take their views seriously when identifying actions for improvement.

The learner engagement team has promoted the role of class representatives well and increased the number of representatives as a result. Over 200 representatives have been trained, and all class representatives understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff develop and support learners well, increasing their confidence in representing their peers and ensuring managers to hear their voices. Both class and departmental representatives provide helpful feedback to college managers. Their training focuses on questions derived from 'How Good Is Our College (HGIOC)'. This approach offers well-structured and focused feedback, which aligns well with college quality arrangements.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with senior managers:

- The overall rate of successful completion for learners on FE level programmes is below the sector norm and has been low for the last four years.
- The overall successful completion rate for learners on part-time FE programmes is below the sector norm.
- The overall successful completion rate for learners on HE level programmes is below the sector norm.

- Overall rates of learner withdrawal for FE and HE programmes are above the sector norm for both full-time and part-time provision.
- Successful completion rates are low for learners from disadvantaged groups. These include ethnic minorities, disabled learners, care experienced learners and learners from deprived backgrounds.
- Learners on part-time programmes are not yet fully engaged in class representative arrangements. As a result, they do not have sufficient opportunity to provide feedback on their learning experience.

### **Main points for action**

- College staff should continue to work to address high rates of learner withdrawal and improve attainment rates across all modes of study. This should include a focus on those curriculum areas where attainment rates have been low for some time.
- Senior staff should ensure that planned changes are implemented in a way that is sustainable for staff.

### **What happens next?**

We recognise the progress that has been made against almost all previous aspects for improvement. However, further progress is required in a number of areas. We will request a progress report on these areas for improvement within agreed timescales. We will then decide what further engagement may be required.

Barbara Nelson  
HM Inspector