

14 November 2023

Mr Kenny MacInnes
Principal
Forth Valley College

Dear Mr MacInnes,

A team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited the college in September 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

The overall rates of successful completion for learners on full-time further education (FE) and higher education (HE) programmes are above the sector norm. In most subject areas, learner successful completion rates are well above the sector norm. Rates of successful completion for learners from key equalities groups, including gender, deprivation, and ethnic minorities, are above the sector norm. Many learners who withdrew early returned the following year and successfully completed their programme.

Learners have access to a wide range of support arrangements and facilities. This helps with learner retention and successful completion of. The help provided by Learner Development Workers to learners on HE level programmes and the introduction of Learning Improvement Facilitators has strengthened academic support for learners. Staff in support roles work proactively to identify learning and other needs early and provide learners with access to effective pastoral and academic support. Approaches used by LDWs to the development of core and essential skills are helping learners to gain wider skills for learning and employment. Managers lead the Curriculum Continuous Improvement (CCI) process well. They work collaboratively to develop and implement college-wide approaches that contribute to learner retention, success, and progression to a positive destination.

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

Senior managers have implemented a range of well-considered and effective policies and strategies that are impacting positively on supporting the quality of learning and teaching. These arrangements take good account of the pace of change and resources required to provide staff with individualised support. All teaching staff have a clear understanding of the key arrangements that underpin the college's ambitions to improve and enhance the quality of learning and teaching. Staff teams make effective use of a schedule of structured meetings to take account of learner feedback, identify the needs of employers, and review performance indicator (PI) information.

Managers draw productively on findings from the Professional Development and Review (PDR) process, digital mentor observations, and curriculum delivery meetings to provide a wide range of professional learning opportunities. All staff are encouraged and supported to access and participate in these sessions. College managers take good account of emerging developments to shape future learning and teaching strategies. This is ensuring that planning takes account of new opportunities, including, for example, the use of artificial intelligence. Appropriate professional learning arrangements are in place that take account of emerging developments to support staff in developing their learning and teaching approaches.

Learner Engagement

The Students' Association (SA) is represented well at the college Board and across all strategic committees. SA officers feel well prepared to participate at college meetings and that their contributions are listened to and respected. Awareness of the SA is high amongst staff and learners. The SA works well with the marketing team to promote extracurricular activities and the wider work of the SA. SA office bearers contribute regularly to staff and student monthly newsletters. Almost all learners are making good use of the college's smartphone app to manage their college experience. They value being able to access timetables, their digital student card, refectory menus and a wide range of other information. This is facilitating greater engagement across all areas of the college. Learner representatives meet regularly with curriculum managers to contribute their views, and the views of their peers, on their learning experience. They feel listened to and value the opportunity to give their suggestions for improvement.

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

- The rates of withdrawal for learners from a care-experienced background is high, and is higher than both the sector norm and the overall withdrawal rate of the wider college.
- Most curriculum teams have not yet fully embedded the development of meta skills within their programmes.
- A few teaching staff do not have a sufficient level of digital skill to fully support the ambitions of the college's strategy for delivering learning and teaching.
- Arrangements for collating an overall, college-wide overview of the quality of learning and teaching are not sufficiently clear.
- Overall, learners are not yet sufficiently aware of the role of the SA in contributing to arrangements for evaluating, reviewing and improving the quality of provision.
- Arrangements for learners to evaluate their learning experience are not consistent across all teaching teams.

Main points for action

- None identified

What happens next?

We are confident that the college has made satisfactory progress and has the capacity to continue to improve. We will continue to monitor progress with regular contact through the link HM Inspector.

Dr John Laird
HM Inspector