

28 May 2024

Angela Cox  
Principal  
Ayrshire College

Dear Ms Cox

A team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited Ayrshire College in April 2024 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 rates of successful completion for learners on all modes of study were below the sector norm in AY 2021-2022. According to unconfirmed data provided by the college rates of successful completion have significantly increased in AY 2022-2023 with corresponding improvements in rates of learner withdrawal. In most subject areas learner successful completion rates were higher than sector norm in 2021-2022. Rates of successful completion for learners who are from a care experienced background and for learners who declare a disability were above sector norm in AY 2021-2022 and according to unconfirmed college data successful completion rates for these learners continue to increase in 2022-2023.

The use of a trauma-informed approach to curriculum design and arrangements to support new learners to make the transition to college are effective in supporting learners to remain on college programmes. Specific groups of learners are supported to overcome barriers to learning through a collaborative approach between curriculum and support staff. This includes learners who are care experienced or have a disability.

Diversity and inclusion are promoted proactively by the students' association (SA) office bearers who host a wide range of events and campaigns that reinforce a college-wide culture and commitment to supporting all learners.

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

The college provides good opportunities for teaching staff to engage in professional development and updating. All staff are offered professional development in trauma-informed approaches to curriculum planning, building future pathways and the Aspire programme. Most teaching staff hold the Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE) and many make good use of professional learning opportunities to gain full professional registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). Effective practice is shared with staff using an online learning framework to access resources from the digital support team and this enhances learning and teaching

approaches. Useful workshops and training have been delivered that support staff well to develop and extend their professional practice.

Curriculum staff are supported well by managers to amend and redesign programmes. A range of transformational projects prioritise curriculum design, digital transformation and sustainability to address the skills needs and enterprise priorities for the region.

Managers draw productively on the college's well-established industry links to plan provision that supports economic growth in the region. This is particularly strong in the fields of aeronautical engineering, sustainability and tourism. This provides learners with access to useful and relevant progression pathways and opportunities for employment.

Staff engage well with college self-evaluation arrangements and demonstrate a good understanding of how to plan for improvement. All staff access comprehensive and reliable information to support monitoring, evaluation and planning activities. Managers record, share and analyse performance indicator (PI) data. They draw effectively on these facilities within formal programme review meetings to evaluate the impact of the curriculum and plan for improvement.

Learner feedback is used well by most staff to reflect on their professional practice and learning and teaching approaches. This is supporting improvements to curriculum design and influencing approaches to help learners to achieve their qualification.

## Learner Engagement

The Ayrshire College Student's Association (SA) is represented well at college board meetings and across all strategic committees. Executive officers meet regularly with senior managers and contribute positively to discussions. Learner feedback from college surveys is used effectively by staff to inform future planning. This has resulted in improvements to curriculum design, adaptations to learning and teaching approaches and enhancement of support services.

Almost all learners have a high awareness of the SA and can identify its impact. Learner representatives participate well at programme team meeting reviews to convey the views of their classmates and contribute to planning of activities to support their peers. They value the opportunity to suggest improvements to learning and teaching. Learners value events organised by staff and the SA to raise awareness of health and wellbeing. These include training on the impact of misuse of drugs, alcohol and gambling, stress management, and the effect of caffeine on sleep.

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

- In some curriculum areas the delivery of core skills is not sufficiently contextualised to ensure it is relevant and engaging for learners.
- Most curriculum teams have not yet fully embedded the development of meta skills within their programmes. This is limiting learner awareness of the importance of these skills and their ability to identify and promote them to prospective employers.

- Learner participation rates in the Student Engagement and Satisfaction Survey (SESS) are low.

### **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.

Sarah Halliwell  
HM Inspector