

23 July 2024

Stella McManus
Principal
South Lanarkshire College

Dear Ms McManus

A team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited South Lanarkshire college in May 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 overall rate of learner successful completion for further education (FE) programmes has significantly increased in AY 2023-2024, with corresponding improvements in rates of learner withdrawal and partial success. The overall rate of learner successful completion for full-time higher education (HE) programmes remains steady, however, part-time HE programmes rates of successful completion have continued to decrease with higher levels of partial success and withdrawal. The overall successful completion rate for care experienced learners in AY 2022-2023 is below the sector average.

The creation of the College Way Market promotes entrepreneurial and commercial approaches to curriculum design. This helps to inform improvements in approaches to learning and teaching and enrich the learner experience. Teaching staff and professional services staff support learners facing financial, social, and psychological barriers and this is impacting positively on retention and attainment. Managers are working well with school staff in the region to offer a wide range of programmes to raise aspirations and awareness of employment opportunities. This provides opportunities for school pupils to progress to further education and employment and to build resilience and confidence levels.

The SA host a range of events and campaigns to reinforce a commitment to supporting learners. These include the White Ribbon campaign, Pride Stride, LGBT History Month and Manuary. The college was recently awarded the Emily Test Charter for the Prevention of Gender Based Violence.

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

A range of transformational projects to address the skills needs and enterprise priorities for the region are being undertaken by managers. Projects include curriculum design, digital transformation, and environmental sustainability. Staff are supported well to amend and redesign programmes to enable shorter and more flexible modes of delivery, to respond to regional needs. The college provides good opportunities for teaching teams to engage in professional development and updating. Staff feel motivated to enhance their pedagogical practice and feel confident in professional dialogue on these themes.

Managers use well-established industry links to plan provision that supports economic growth in the region and to provide work placements and employment opportunities for learners. Teaching and support staff work well together to support an increasing number of learners who have complex and multiple learning support needs. They encourage learners to become independent and support them well to progress.

Learner Engagement

The Students' Association (SA) is proactive in planning and promoting initiatives to support learner engagement, inclusion and diversity. ESOL learners, who do not feel ready to be class representatives, are given volunteering opportunities across the college. This is helping to build their capabilities and confidence levels and improve their social language barriers.

The SA uses social media well to provide a platform for regular updates to learners. This ensures communication is consistent for all learners and includes a fortnightly Student News 4 U bulletin. Learners value events organised by support staff and the SA to raise awareness of mental health issues and the impact of poverty. Many learners benefit from peer support in overcoming challenges such as the cost-of-living crisis and financial barriers.

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

- There is no strategic or consistent approach to the tracking and monitoring of meta-skills within college programmes. This is limiting learner awareness of the importance of these skills and their ability to identify and discuss them with prospective employers.
- Most learner representatives do not receive sufficient training to undertake their role effectively.

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