

18 July 2023

Ms Liz Connolly
Principal and Chief Executive
West College Scotland

Dear Ms Connolly

On the 26 and 27 April 2023 a team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited West College Scotland 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.

Recruitment

- Staff have made several positive improvements to marketing and admissions arrangements and in the current year the college is working confidently toward meeting recruitment targets
- In response to learner and employer feedback, college managers are adjusting the curriculum and timetables to increase part-time and flexible learning options to increase recruitment and support learners to attend college whilst remaining in work.

Retention

- Staff in a number of areas have revised the curriculum to include a greater number of options at SCQF level 4 and increase the range of programmes on offer. This has helped to ensure that learners can be placed on a programme that meets their needs.
- College staff have increased the support available to help learners prepare for college. A focus on digital skills has been useful in enhancing learner knowledge, skills, and confidence early in their programme regarding the use of IT.

Attainment

- The majority of learners make good progress and achieve their qualification.
- Most learners in the college study FE programmes, and the overall rate of learner success for full-time FE programmes is above the sector average.

Progression

- The proportion of full-time learners who sustain a positive destination 3-6 months after leaving college is high. This has increased for both FE and HE learners over time.

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

- Despite the high number of class representatives in place across the college, not all have undertaken training or are active in their role. Most learners have little knowledge about the role and impact of the Students Association (SA).
- Staff and learners feel increasingly frustrated by the complex range of learning technologies and communication platforms in use across the college.
- Almost all teaching staff were not sufficiently aware of how the improvements in IT infrastructure were being implemented or monitored, and were not clear about how their views were being taken into account.
- The overall rate of learner success rate for full-time HE programmes is below the sector average.

The following main point for action was identified:

- Senior managers should reflect on the introduction of digital initiatives and ensure staff and learner feedback is fully considered as new systems are implemented.

What happens next?

We recognise the progress made against almost all aspects for improvement, however, further progress is required in learner engagement, including the profile of the Students Association. We will ask for a report on progress on the agreed areas for improvement to be provided to the college link HM Inspector within agreed timescales. Taking account of the progress report, we will then decide what further engagement with the college is required.

Dr John Laird
HM Inspector