

30 July 2024

Jackie Galbraith
Principal
West Lothian College

Dear Ms Galbraith

A team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited West Lothian 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 successful completion rate for learners on full-time and part-time further education (FE) and higher education (HE) programmes are higher than the sector norms. The overall successful completion rate for learners residing in the most deprived postcode areas, care-experienced learners, those with disabilities, and ethnic minorities are significantly above the sector norm.

College staff are trained in trauma-responsive strategies to support learners' emotional and psychological needs, contributing to a safe and inclusive learning environment. The TRUST Project offers personalised support and resources to learners experiencing trauma or involved with the criminal justice system, enabling them to continue their studies. Peer navigators provide valuable support to learners with complex needs, assisting them in accessing appropriate support services to overcome educational and personal barriers. The Students' Association (SA) promotes actively, diversity and inclusion through organising events and campaigns. The college recently achieved the LGBT Youth Scotland Gold Charter. The college works with partners The Larder and Pennies Pantry to provide food and meals for learners at a reduced cost. These initiatives help address food poverty and promote healthy eating.

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

Managers lead effectively the college's three-phase curriculum self-evaluation process to identify areas for improvement and make informed decisions for future curriculum development. Curriculum leaders use regional skills intelligence and work closely with industry partners to develop and update programmes that prepare learners well for entering the workforce or progressing to higher education. Curriculum leaders effectively use data to support the delivery of learning and teaching, allowing staff to evaluate learner progress, track success outcomes, and optimise strategies for continuous improvement. Managers work well with schools in the region to raise awareness of employment opportunities. Learning and teaching champions (LTCs) and quality champions (QCs) effectively share best practices in learning, teaching, assessment, and quality assurance arrangements. Using information from learner surveys, curriculum

teams reflect on their learning and teaching approaches, adjust practice to enhance the learning experience, and ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and engaging. All full-time, permanent teaching staff are TQFE-qualified. Most learners have the opportunity to participate in work experience or industry competitions, allowing them to apply their knowledge in industry settings and develop skills for life, learning, and work, including networking with professionals.

Learner Engagement

The Students' Association is well represented on all strategic committees, including the college board. The AY 2022–23 SFC student satisfaction and engagement survey rates are above the sector average. Teaching and support staff actively listen to and respond positively to learners' suggestions for programme improvements. Learners feel valued and well supported, and their feedback is used well to inform curriculum development. The student association (SA) is actively involved in decision-making arrangements and is accessible to part-time, evening, remote, and work-based learners. They offer a range of scheduling options to ensure their availability. Learner feedback is effectively utilised to identify areas for improvement and enhance overall satisfaction. Staff encourages learners to lead their own learning, emphasising autonomy and responsibility.

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

- The rate of successful completion for one full-time FE subject group declined from 85% to 51.70% which is 6.5% below the sector norm.
- There is no 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 promote them to prospective employers.

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.

Jacqueline McLellan
HM Inspector