

Item: 7

College Management Council Sub-committee: 22 August 2022.

HMI Progress Visit to Orkney College.

Report by Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

1. Purpose of Report

To advise of inspection findings of Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) Progress Visit to Orkney College in March 2022.

2. Recommendations

The Sub-committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That Orkney College was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate on 7 and 8 March 2022, with the Report of the Progress Visit attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2.2.

That the five national themes which Progress Visits include are as follows:

- Curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment.
- Services to support learning.
- Stakeholder engagement.
- Evaluation to facilitate improvement.
- Learner progress and outcomes.

2.3.

That the overall outcome from the Progress Visit for the College was a satisfactory grade.

The Sub-committee is invited to scrutinise:

2.4.

The inspection findings contained in the HMI Progress Visit report, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, in order to obtain assurance that action has been taken or agreed as necessary.

3. Background

3.1.

On 26 January 2022, the College's Principal was informed by HMI that Orkney College would receive a Progress Visit within six weeks.

3.2.

The dates of the visit were subsequently confirmed as 7 and 8 March 2022 and that the HMI team would comprise HMI Dr John Laird as lead inspector and HMI Barbara Nelson.

3.3.

The five national themes which HMI Progress Visits include were identified as:

- Curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment.
- Services to support learning.
- Stakeholder engagement.
- Evaluation to facilitate improvement.
- Learner progress and outcomes.

3.4.

HMI Inspectors were informed that the Assistant Principal would lead and co-ordinate the Progress Visit. Ahead of the visit, HMI Inspectors requested the following information to inform the sessions which were required to be arranged for the visit:

- Context statement.
- Updated action plan.
- Performance Indicator (PI) data.

4. Summary of Inspection

4.1.

The outcome report, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, outlines a number of key strengths, together with areas for further progress and actions required.

4.2.

The overall outcome from the Progress Visit for the College was a satisfactory grade.

5. Corporate Governance

This report relates to the Council complying with governance and scrutiny and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

6. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report for consideration.

7. Legal Aspects

The Council should comply with all legal recommendations made and subject to that, there are no legal implications arising from this noting report.

8. Contact Officers

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Joanne Wallace, Assistant Principal, Orkney College, [Email joanne.wallace@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:joanne.wallace@uhi.ac.uk).

9. Appendix

Appendix 1: HMI Progress Visit Report.

College Progress Visit Report

Orkney College UHI

1 April 2022

College Principal	Professor Edward Abbott-Halpin
Progress Visit (PV) Date	7 March 2022
College Nominee	Joanne Wallace
Lead Inspector	Dr John Laird
College HMI	Barbara Nelson
Outcome of Progress Visit	Satisfactory progress

Purpose of the progress visit

Progress Visits (PVs) are planned collaboratively between the college, Education Scotland and SFC. The team carrying out the PV engages with staff, learners and other stakeholders and produce a summary report for each college, which will be shared with the principal, college Regional Board and/or college Board of Management.

Overall judgement regarding progress

At the end of the PV, HM Inspectors of Education, Associate Assessors and Student Team Members review the evidence gathered during their discussions with college managers, staff, learners and stakeholders. They assess the progress that colleges have made against their Action Plans, taking account of any changes to local circumstances. Based on this evidence, the team forms a view as to whether the college has made sufficient progress against its Action Plans or has not made sufficient progress. This outcome is contained within this report with accompanying commentary to support the findings.

The PV to Orkney College explored five overarching themes linked to the college's enhancement plan and priorities around COVID-19 recovery. The themes are:

- Curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment;
- Services to support learning;
- Learner engagement;
- Evaluation to facilitate improvement; and
- Learner progress and outcomes.

Background and context

The college and its context

Orkney College UHI is not incorporated under the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992. It is governed through Orkney Islands Council which is responsible for the provision of further education (FE) in Orkney. The college's higher education (HE) provision is delivered through its academic partnership with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI). The College offers provision from SCQF levels 1 -12. The college Principal has been on a period of extended leave recently, during which time, the Assistant Principals have collectively undertaken responsibilities for the strategic direction and management of the college. In March 2021, a major cyber incident caused significant disruption across the UHI partnership.

The college delivers provision for senior phase pupils in the two secondary schools and three junior high schools in Orkney. Over the last two years, the economy in Orkney has remained resilient with low unemployment and many local industries are experiencing an increased demand for trained staff.

Findings from the progress visit

Curriculum, learning and teaching and assessment

Areas of positive progress

- Across the college, staff demonstrated significant tenacity and commitment in overcoming the challenges presented by COVID-19 and the UHI Cyber incident. They worked flexibly and collaboratively to meet the needs of learners and maintain the delivery of learning and teaching.
- In preparation for the move to remote learning, managers worked diligently to ensure that staff and learners had appropriate access to IT equipment and to the internet. Staff were encouraged to take their own desktop equipment home, which enabled college laptops and a further 70 laptops supplied through UHI, to be made available to learners. All staff and learners had appropriate access to digital resources within a week or two of the initial period of college closure.
- Overall, learner feedback on the arrangements made by the college to convert provision to remote learning was positive. Learners had easy and swift access to IT resources and learning materials, and were able to contact teaching staff as required.
- Connectivity issues were dealt with quickly and effectively. The efficacy of learners' access to IT is monitored regularly and action is taken promptly when hardware or connectivity becomes an issue.
- A pragmatic and helpful RAG rating system was implemented to identify and prioritise actions required to convert programmes from face-to-face to online delivery. This process has supported a more thorough, college-wide system for assessing arrangements for delivering online provision effectively.
- Due to their work with UHI, most teaching staff were familiar with the facilities and materials associated with delivering learning and teaching remotely. In programme areas where classes had predominantly been delivered on-campus and face-to-face, teaching staff and learners benefitted from online resources being made available through the UHI network.
- From the onset of the pandemic, the college worked well to support young people at risk of not entering a positive destination on leaving school. Staff met weekly with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) careers staff and partners to coordinate a collective offer for individual young people. A new programme was created by college staff to provide winter leavers with an opportunity to prepare for entering work or undertaking further learning. These arrangements have increased significantly the number of young people achieving a positive destination.
- Throughout periods of remote learning, overall levels of learner attendance and engagement were generally high. However, learners undertaking a college programme whilst at school as part of the senior phase were inexperienced in learning online and encountered challenges in utilising the college's digital platforms. This impacted negatively on the attendance and engagement levels of this group of learners.

- The college responded quickly to resolve issues caused by the cyber incident on the UHI partnership in March 2021. Systems for learning and teaching were restored within a week and staff overcame longer term issues, such as accessing learner records and printing facilities, by reverting to more traditional methods that were not reliant on digital technology.
- COVID-19 on-campus mitigations, such as physical distancing, presented challenges for managing learners' access to practical facilities, such as hair salons. Programme teams worked proactively to enable learners to access vocational areas safely. They carefully coordinated attendance of individuals and groups and made effective use of video to record demonstrations and application of specialist resources. Teaching staff ensured learners had access to support in practical activities during restricted periods.
- Staff receive helpful and effective training in the use of IT to support remote delivery and independent learning. In-service career long professional learning (CLPL) days and access to a wider range of technologies helped staff to extend and enhance their skills in using digital resources to deliver provision and services.
- Staff are supported well to reflect on, and improve, their teaching skills. The introduction of a model for observing learning and teaching, aligned to the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) standards, is providing many teaching staff with a useful structure to reflect on continuous improvement of their skills.

Areas for further progress and actions required

- Prior to the pandemic, most subject areas had begun to incorporate meta skills and Career Management Skills (CMS) within programmes. However, progress was interrupted due to the impact of COVID-19 and as a result meta skills and CMS are not yet embedded across all programmes.
- The complexity of requirements for the college to respond to Orkney Islands Council for FE level provision, and UHI for HE level provision constrains the ability and agility of college managers to plan cohesive and efficient curriculum pathways.

Services to support learning

Areas of positive progress

- Support staff plan and provide high quality services for learners and work flexibly and quickly to deliver individualised support. Learners value the quality of services they receive and feel well supported to undertake their studies.
- At the start of the pandemic, support teams worked diligently to convert access to services from on-campus to online. The marketing team produced a helpful and informative fortnightly newsletter to highlight and signpost learners to the range of services available to them through the college and in the local community. Almost all learners know how to access support services and there are indications of increased requests for support, as learners were able to access services confidentially from home. However, a few learners found services difficult to access online.

- From the onset of the pandemic, staff identified an increase in the number of learners experiencing mental health issues and a decrease in the levels of engagement of some learners. To address this, the college took swift action to supply mobile phones to teaching and support staff to enable them to maintain contact with learners, particularly the most vulnerable or less confident learners. Staff made effective use of this facility to engage with learners and respond to identified support needs.
- The college prioritised the need to provide learners with access to support for wellbeing, resilience and mental health. A wide range of partnerships, training and resources were put in place to provide learners with access to appropriate support.. Learners have easy access to support for mental health through the TogetherAll portal and Spectrum Life.
- Learners with Additional Support Needs (ASN) are supported well and a range of special projects focussed on mental health and wellbeing are incorporated within progression courses. Student Support Assistants delivered training to families and carers to help learners adjust to learning remotely and engaged weekly with learners to monitor safeguarding and wellbeing.
- Curriculum staff support learners well to measure their own progress and plan further learning. Guidance staff lead regular sessions to enable learners to discuss any issues about their programme and performance.
- During the pandemic, collaboration between support service teams and teaching departments increased. This has resulted in better partnership working to coordinate and provide support for learners where it is required. It has also ensured a greater involvement of support staff in the evaluation of programmes and provision.

Area for further progress and actions required

- Referral arrangements between support service teams and curriculum staff can at times be reliant on informal communication. This reduces the ability of the college to capture fully the range of support being delivered to learners across the college.

Learner engagement

Areas of positive progress

- Staff take good account of the learner voice to influence the work of the college. Learners are confident that their feedback at class and college level is taken seriously by staff and that concerns are responded to quickly.
- Arrangements are in place for each programme to select a class representative. However, during COVID-19 restrictions, some FE level programmes were unable to enlist learners to undertake this role. To address this, the college made effective use of the Highlands and Islands Students Association (HISA's) Student Voice Toolkit to enable learners to undertake the role of class representative on an informal basis. The college has productive links with HISA.

- Throughout periods of remote learning, teaching and support staff maintained productive one-to-one contact with individual learners, and class groups were invited regularly to give formal and informal feedback on their learning experience. Staff used these engagements to align provision and services to learner needs and preferences. For example, class groups were able to choose the platform for accessing lessons online.

Area for further progress and actions required

- The effectiveness of class representation across FE level programmes is inconsistent, with only a limited number of class groups having a nominated class representative. This limits opportunities for capturing the learner voice.

Evaluation to facilitate improvement

Areas of positive progress

- The college's evaluation and improvement arrangements were used well by staff throughout periods of remote learning. Early in the academic year, the Stop/Start/Continue approach helped staff to gain initial feedback from learners, and findings from mid-year and end-of-unit reviews were used productively to make necessary adjustments.
- Student support teams met weekly to discuss provision and prioritise interventions to support learners. When carrying out annual evaluation, they took good account of learner feedback and data to plan improvements.
- The college worked well with stakeholders and partners to ensure curriculum planning takes good account of the local economic context and Labour Market Intelligence (LMI). College managers are working with OIC to develop a long term business plan to ensure resources are utilised to support progression opportunities.
- Employer advisory groups are in place for almost all curriculum areas. During periods of remote learning many advisory groups met more frequently which enabled decisions and actions, such as arrangements for work placements, to be taken forward quickly.
- During the pandemic, the college hosted weekly liaison meetings with depute head teachers (DHTs) from local secondary schools to plan joint approaches to resolve emerging issues and coordinate support for young people. At departmental level, increased liaison between college and school staff has encouraged better collaboration and joint planning.
- The shift from face-to-face to online delivery increased the level of team teaching across the college. Staff drew productively on working collaboratively with their peers to share practice and digital approaches to delivering lessons.
- Previous and current evaluation of the curriculum had identified a need to develop and incorporate meta skills, CMS and the work placement standard within programmes. Some curriculum teams have started to address this. However, most teaching teams are still in the process of incorporating these aspects within curriculum planning and delivery.

- The college is trialling and developing a peer observation process. Although at an early stage, staff who have engaged in the process found that the clear documentation used to support the process encourages participation. Staff carrying out observation or being observed, report that they are gaining useful learning from the experience.
- College staff have established productive working relationships with key stakeholders and regularly seek feedback on how to improve the quality of provision and services. A number of useful changes had been implemented as a result of stakeholder feedback and partnership activities.
- In the period of absence of the Principal, the Assistant Principals worked well together to identify and drive a clear vision for the future of the college. Throughout the period of the pandemic they worked collaboratively to ensure staff maintained a steady and continuous focus on developing and improving the quality of provision. This has included adjusting processes and structures to enhance the experience of learners. Many of these changes are at an early stage of implementation and it is too early to fully measure impact.

Area for further progress and actions required

- None

Learner progress and outcomes

Areas of positive progress

- Almost all learners who enrol on a college programme are successful and attain a certificated award. The college consistently performs above the sector average for full-time and part-time provision.
- Attainment rates for learners have been above the latest published national sector performance level (2019/20) for the past three years.
- The attainment rate for learners with a disability is 13 percentage points above the last published national sector performance level of 68%.
- The attainment rate for full-time care experienced learners has been above the published national sector performance rate for the past 5 years. Overall numbers are small but the college has achieved over 70% success in each of the last 4 years. College data indicates that this trend is continuing.
- Learners on a range of programmes gain useful additional certification to support and enhance their employment opportunities. These include navigation certificates, first aid certificates, and food hygiene certificates.
- Almost all learners on FE programmes achieve a positive destination. Increased support from SDS, greater individual attention from staff, and in some areas an increased focus on developing CMS, have contributed to a high level of positive outcomes. In areas such as

care or hospitality, almost all learners secure employment or a place in college or university before they complete their current programmes.

Area for further progress and actions required

- None

What happens next?

The progress visit report will be shared with SFC, the college Board (and in multi-college regions, the Regional Strategic Body).

Dr John Laird
HM Inspector