

Uplands Educational Trust

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent specialist college

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Uplands Educational Trust (UET) is a registered charity. The Trust comprises of a Post 19 Learning Centre, a supported living residential facility and a range of employment and enterprise businesses. The learning centre for learners aged 19 to 25 opened in September 2013 and gained Independent Specialist College of Further Education (ISC) status in 2014. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 26 learners on study programmes. All learners have mild to severe learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders and complex medical needs.

Learners are working at or below level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework. Learning takes place in the learning centre and in a variety of internal and external work experience placements, including farm provision and two charity shops owned by UET.

Learners mainly come from the Swindon area. Most are day learners living at home with their parents, but some live in supported living accommodation owned by UET.

Themes

Outcomes

How successful is the college in enabling all learners to achieve their learning goals and progress to appropriate and sustainable destinations?

Learners are making good progress towards achieving their learning goals. The vast majority of learners achieved their targets last year, including targets for literacy and numeracy. Learners' progression between programmes and from one level to the next is particularly good. As this is new provision, no learners have yet fully completed their learning programme and left the learning centre.

How effective are staff in enabling learners to develop the skills and independence required for the next stage of their lives?

All learners develop a good range of skills through their well-planned individualised learning programmes and their involvement in the broad range of work experience, either with UET or with employers in the locality. Internally, learners successfully run a coffee shop and a lunch enterprise. They make all the products on sale in the coffee shop, such as cakes and biscuits; they make the lunches and all the drinks. Learners serve the customers, including external customers, and have responsibility for taking the money and giving the correct change. Learners also run an enterprise session where they run a tuck shop and make smoothies to sell to other learners in the centre. All of these experiences enable learners to develop their literacy and numeracy as well as their practical, social and independence skills.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

How effective are staff in identifying learners' starting points and how well is the information used to create challenging and individualised learning plans?

Staff carry out detailed and thorough initial assessments of learners' skills and educational standards, including assessments for numeracy and literacy. Teachers use the information to create accurate individualised education plans (IEPs) with clear goals and targets set for the four areas of literacy, numeracy, skills and work skills. Most targets are precise and help learners make progress, but a small minority are too vague. Teachers use the information well in planning lessons and in their teaching sessions to ensure learners make good progress.

How effective is the monitoring, recording and reviewing of learners' progress?

The monitoring and reviewing of learners' progress, both in individual teaching sessions and over time, are good. Teachers and learners review and update the IEPs every term, setting new targets as learners achieve and make progress. Teachers and support assistants also review the learning goals identified for each learner during and at the end of every teaching session and record their achievements and progress. Staff display learners' targets on the walls in the learning centre, thus giving all learners quick and easy access to the information.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

How well do leaders and managers plan the curriculum to meet the needs and aspirations of all learners?

Leaders and managers have high expectations of all learners. They develop and plan the curriculum well to meet the individual needs, interests and aspirations of each learner. The development of the curriculum through three pathways ensures all learners are working at the correct level. Accreditation is mainly through Oxford, Cambridge and RSA (OCR) and most learners achieve well. However, senior leaders are aware that the curriculum has not always been sufficiently challenging for a small number of learners and have put in place plans to make the programmes more challenging for those learners.

How well do leaders and managers ensure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment?

The performance management of staff is strong. Teachers are very clear that they are responsible for the progress and success of their learners. All teachers have targets set, one of which is to produce good or better lessons. Managers have fully implemented arrangements for observing teaching, learning and assessment. They make good use of the information from formal observations, but much sharing of

good practice is also achieved through peer observations and learning walks. Teachers have responsibility for the performance management of their learning assistants and for ensuring their work in the classroom is of a very high standard. The joint observation carried out with learning centre staff confirmed that learning assistants are well deployed in lessons and learners benefit from their support.

Areas identified for improvement from the observations of teaching and learning provide the focus for the training and development of staff. Formal training takes place three times a year so managers are able to address quickly issues arising from observations.

How effective are the arrangements to safeguard all learners?

Safeguarding meets statutory requirements. The central record is up to date and well managed. Staff record all safeguarding incidents and concerns in the incident log in each individual learner's file. The logs are detailed, but the precise nature of the issue or concern is not always clear. Although the incident logs for each individual learner are detailed, there is no central log held bringing together information about all the incidents across the learning centre. This makes it harder for staff to identify quickly how many incidents have occurred, and whether there has been an increase in the number and type of incidents. At the time of the monitoring visit, managers were handling a recent incident, which involved the police and the adult safeguarding board, particularly well.

E-safety awareness training for learners is appropriate and learners understand how to keep themselves safe. All staff have regular training in safeguarding and protecting children and vulnerable adults. Staff also have training in behaviour management, which is essential in helping to protect learners and in keeping them safe.

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