

Robert Owen Communities

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates

19–21 October 2016

Overall effectiveness		Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Provision for learners with high needs Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	
Outcomes for learners	Good	
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected	

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Strong leadership and effective business planning ensure good outcomes for learners.
- Trustees challenge managers effectively and ensure they make improvements that benefit learners within a firmly established culture of continuous improvement.
- Learners make good progress at the college and enjoy achieving challenging tasks. They improve their social skills and learn to communicate more effectively.
- Learners benefit from using very good community facilities that are the result of effective partnerships made by managers.
- Learners are prepared very effectively for life after college through taking part in a good work experience programme and interesting work-related activities.
- Staff listen to what learners say and put them at the centre of all they do.
- Staff are well qualified, understand and meet the special needs of learners very well. They are ambitious for learners to make as much progress as they are capable of.
- Staff remove barriers to learning, enabling learners to take part actively. They care for and promote the well-being of learners.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Robert Owen Communities (ROC) is a registered charity that provides care and support for adults with learning disabilities. It has been operating as an independent specialist college since September 2012. ROC is a wholly owned subsidiary of United Response. At the time of the inspection there were seven learners enrolled on programmes. Learners either live at home with their parents or in supported living accommodation.
- Learners have mild to severe learning disabilities and are working at or below level 1 of the National Qualification Framework. The college operates as a virtual college in Torbay, Exeter and Cornwall. Most of the learning takes place in the community using resources such as libraries, leisure centres and other community venues, as well as in ROC's own specialist provision that includes farms in Devon and Cornwall.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and availability of information, advice and guidance to help learners make well-considered choices about their next stages of education, employment or training.
- Make sure that managers record all information more thoroughly in relation to safeguarding, and that learners fully understand how to keep themselves safe when using social media or the internet.
- Ensure that all staff have the knowledge and confidence to explain the 'Prevent' duty to learners so that they know about the risks associated with extremist behaviour.
- Use information collected on teaching, learning and assessment to share good practice across the college and remedy weaknesses.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Managers provide very good outcomes as a result of a clear vision and strong set of values, designed through consultation with learners. Managers have communicated clear strategic priorities that create opportunities enabling more learners to participate in learning.
- Managers are ambitious for learners. They have high expectations, particularly in relation to ensuring that learners gain good independence skills. Team leaders and 'learning guides' with great pride provide fully and creatively for the individual needs of learners.
- Learners benefit from strong partnerships with a range of organisations that include employers and schools. These partnerships provide learners with smooth transition into college, ready access to housing, good-quality work experience and job opportunities that enable them to develop their work skills effectively. Close collaboration with employers paves the way for learners to secure future employment.
- Professional development is good and linked to regular and effective appraisals of staff performance. Effective performance management results in improvements in practice, for example in the variety of ways in which team leaders and 'learning guides' assess learners and receive feedback from them.
- Through an effective self-assessment process, managers identify where they are most successful and where improvements are required. They use the views of learners well in deciding priorities for action. However, in undertaking the self-assessment, managers do not pay enough attention to evaluating the impact of actions taken on improving outcomes for learners.
- Managers monitor learners' performance very effectively. They take action where progress is slow to make sure that learners do not fall behind and become dispirited.
- Learners are respectful of each other and towards staff as a result of the successful work of managers in ensuring that learners appreciate diversity and what equal opportunities mean in modern British society. There is no bullying in college or when learners go on work placements.
- Managers have ensured that learners receive regular information and guidance on their next stages of education, employment or training. However, learners are disadvantaged by insufficient access to specialist careers advice and too much variation in how their individual goals and their records of achievement are recorded.
- Managers do not use information from observing teaching, learning and assessment to make improvements promptly by tackling weaknesses and sharing good practice.
- Most staff have completed training on the 'Prevent' duty but do not yet have the confidence to give learners the knowledge they need to keep themselves safe from risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is good. The interim board of trustees has clear oversight of the work of ROC and brings about improvements effectively. The board receives regular and clear reports that keep trustees well informed about progress, and they use the information well to determine future actions.
- Trustees are very suitably experienced and provide a good level of challenge and support to managers. Trustees regularly challenge managers on plans and on the impact of their actions in improving learners' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A strong culture of safeguarding is central to the work of the college and learners are safe and know who to contact if they have concerns. However, leaflets and information about who is responsible for safeguarding are not sufficiently visible around the college.
- Staff are well trained in safeguarding and respond appropriately and quickly to incidents. Trustees and senior leaders monitor accidents, incidents and safeguarding concerns carefully; they take prompt action where necessary to guard against further incidents.
- Managers follow safe and appropriate recruitment procedures well. Risk assessments on activities that learners undertake and on work placements are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Learners make good progress and benefit from the excellent range of support from specialist staff that include occupational therapists, psychologists and psychiatrists.
- Team leaders and 'learning guides', working with employers and other partners, provide stimulating and relevant learning activities that help learners make good progress towards their individual learning targets.
- In lessons, learners improve their ability to develop new skills because team leaders and 'learning guides' plan their learning based on a good understanding of each learner. Team leaders and 'learning guides' thoroughly assess skills such as speaking and listening, numeracy, physical movement and the ability to process information.
- Learners have suitable learning plans that identify specific areas for improvement, for example being able to identify colours. Team leaders concentrate on improving learners' mental, physical and emotional well-being, and their actions result in learners with high levels of anxiety coping with new and potentially stressful situations successfully.
- Team leaders and 'learning guides' adapt learning activities carefully to individual needs and in many cases help learners overcome negative learning experiences through their creative and sensitive approach. For example, as a result of motivating work experience, one learner with very poor reading skills improved these skills and now aspires to live independently.
- Learners improve their English and mathematical skills; in particular they make good progress in verbal communication, listening and following instructions and in practical mathematics.
- Learners benefit greatly from the help of 'learning guides', particularly in the early stages of their time at college. The 'learning guides' build positive relationships with learners, and set them high standards and appropriate challenges. 'Learning guides' decrease their support appropriately as learners increase their levels of independence or develop new skills.
- Team leaders and 'learning guides' make sure that learners feel secure, at ease and ready to learn. Where a learner is distressed, anxious or distracted they use good strategies to refocus the learner and keep them engaged with their work. They help learners manage their behaviour well and act appropriately in a wide range of situations.
- Communication with parents is good. They know the progress their sons or daughters make and feel involved in their development. They value the care and attention given to learners. Parents particularly appreciate the high expectations for their children and learners and the excellent use made of community involvement to promote the independence of learners.

- Team leaders and 'learning guides' do not clearly record the medium- and long-term goals of learners in individual learning plans or link them to wider learning activities. The lack of such goals and too strong a focus on achieving formal qualifications limits the effectiveness of the advice and guidance that learners receive.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners acquire good general skills that prepare them for employment, such as time-keeping and punctuality, as well as specific skills including cooking, housekeeping, horticulture, and caring for animals.
- Learners also gain good work-related skills and knowledge such as grooming donkeys and goats, and learning about food safety in supermarkets, stock rotation and quality control.
- Excellent work placements enable learners to gain confidence, improve their ability to work independently and acquire good work skills. The range of placements, including garages, farms, cafés and shops, meets the aspirations and interests of learners well. Learners experience a good variety of work placements to help them decide on their preferred long-term work goals.
- Learners are hardworking and well behaved. They become a valuable asset to the employers when undertaking work experience. Learners mix well with their co-workers and participate well in everyday interactions in the workplace.
- 'Learning guides' prepare learners well for each placement and adapt activities and responsibilities according to the needs of each individual. Learners enjoy being challenged and benefit from a very good range of enrichment activities, including sailing, rock climbing, conservation work and horse riding. Where appropriate, learners can also take part in driving lessons or cycle training.
- Learners' attendance at college is good. All staff pay great attention to ensuring the safety and welfare of learners, which contributes greatly to learners staying on their programmes until they finish.
- Learners improve their English and mathematics; they learn good life-skills for independence in everyday life such as managing money and travelling on buses safely.
- In places of work and in the community, learners show very good awareness of personal safety. Where appropriate, learners quickly develop skills to use public transport independently or with minimal support. They become confident users of community facilities and enjoy new experiences such as visiting museums, art galleries, gyms, local places of interest and the surrounding countryside.
- Learners improve their communication and social skills. Team leaders and 'learning guides' develop their ability to speak up for themselves and, as a result, learners speak their minds, saying how they feel and what they want. They enjoy being part of events such as 'Parliament Week', when they learn the importance of 'speaking up' and about the value of democracy.
- All learners increase their fitness and understanding of eating healthily, and improve their emotional well-being as a result of attending their local gym, taking part in yoga and meditation sessions or outdoor activities. Learners know how to look after themselves, understand why personal hygiene is important and have a good knowledge of hygiene rules for the preparation and cooking of food.
- Learners who arrive at college with a history of disruptive or inappropriate behaviour respond very quickly to the calm, firm and sensitive approach taken by team leaders and

'learning guides'. As a result, they settle well.

- Learners are safe at the college and know who they can report concerns to. Learners who are able to use the internet and social media are aware of what is acceptable use and behaviour. However, there is insufficient reinforcement about keeping safe online.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Learners attain their learning goals and make better than expected progress from very low starting points. Some gain qualifications and many surpass their expectations of themselves and those of their parents.
- All learners achieve challenging targets that are carefully planned to meet their individual interests and reach the standards expected of them. For example, they improve their skills in personal care and their ability to communicate with others through placements and training in settings that develop customer care.
- Many learners progress on to further courses and acquire longer-term work experience, and a few progress into paid employment.
- Learners improve their English and mathematics and learn good life skills for independence in everyday life. For example, the attention given to developing counting, adding and subtraction enables learners to manage money and to travel on buses safely.
- The rates at which learners achieve and progress on their individual programmes show no gaps in attainment between different groups of learners.

Provider details

Unique reference number	139246
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	6
Principal/CEO	Therese Timberlake
Telephone number	01803 868 550
Website	www.roc-uk.org

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	1	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	N/A							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	7							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency 3 local authorities							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by Rebecca Quantrill, personalisation manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection monitoring report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Penny Mathers, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Nigel Evans

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Learner View

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

Employer View

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016