

The Orpheus Centre

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates

23–25 January 2018

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		Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders, managers and trustees, working with staff, have successfully improved the quality of the provision and the outcomes for students.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that the provision closely matches the needs of students and their future ambitions.
- Students are enthusiastic about overcoming their barriers to learning; they are highly motivated and inspired by the exciting curriculum and the opportunities they have to perform.
- Students respect each other and value the diversity of the college community; they work effectively together to create performance work of a high standard.
- Students develop good work-related skills and benefit from effective work-experience placements that are closely matched to their aspirations.
- Students enjoy learning and are very proud of the skills they develop and the work they create; they make good progress.
- Students gain confidence in their communication skills and successfully develop greater independence.
- In a small minority of theory lessons, teachers do not meet the needs of all students; as a result, a small minority of students do not make the progress they could.
- Supported internship placements for students are not currently in place and require further development.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The Orpheus Centre is an independent specialist college located in Godstone, Surrey. It provides education for students who have moderate learning difficulties and a wide range of other physical and sensory disabilities and medical needs. At the time of the inspection, 35 students, from 17 local authorities, were studying at the college. Of these, 13 attend daily and 22 live in supported housing on the site. The college also supports students funded by social services, but this provision was out of scope for this inspection.
- The focus of the college's curriculum is to develop students' communication, social interaction and independence skills using performing and visual arts as a medium to prepare them for adulthood. Through the development of independent living skills, students are supported to progress to semi-independent and supported housing destinations and, where appropriate, into voluntary and paid employment.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that they:
 - further support and develop those teachers and support staff who are less confident or experienced to put the new skills they have acquired into practice effectively
 - further develop the effectiveness of discrete English and mathematics sessions to speed up the progress all students make
 - continue to work with local employers to secure supported internship placements for students as a positive progression route
 - further extend the provision of impartial careers advice and guidance to enable all students to access these.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, managers and trustees have made significant progress in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and students' outcomes and personal development. These are now good. Since the previous inspection, leaders have focused their energy and resources on changing the culture at The Orpheus Centre, redefining and refining their mission. They ensure that the quality of provision and the students' experiences are central to their decision making. They are highly ambitious for all of their students.
- Leaders have focused significant resources on improving the skills of the workforce, including the teaching and learning team. All teaching and support staff are now suitably qualified or about to complete their qualifications. Staff have benefited from extensive, high-quality, professional development. As a result, teachers and support staff now have the specialist knowledge and skills they require to support their students well. The vast majority of teachers and support staff use these new skills effectively in the classroom. However, a few less confident and less experienced teachers and support staff require further support and development to put these skills into practice consistently.
- Leaders and managers have accurately identified the areas of provision that require further development and have targeted these through a rigorous self-assessment and quality improvement process. They have made great strides in dealing with areas of weakness and promoting good practice. As a result, teachers feel confident to experiment in their practice and share new initiatives.
- Leaders and managers have made an extensive review of the curriculum to make sure that the provision now matches more closely students' needs and aspirations. The refocused mission centres on helping students to live independent and fulfilling lives in their chosen community. The specialist performing and visual arts curriculum helps students to develop the transferable skills they need to thrive as independent citizens and as members of the community.
- Leaders and managers have improved the way staff develop students' English and mathematical skills in vocational sessions. However, the quality of discrete English and mathematics classes has not improved to the same extent. Students are able to talk about the improvements they have made and the impact their new skills have had on their everyday lives.
- Staff promote the value of diversity and students show mutual respect and tolerance towards each other, staff and visitors. They demonstrate good standards of behaviour. Students gain a broad understanding of their responsibilities and their contribution to society through a range of relevant activities and events, such as raising money for charity. Staff and students demonstrate British values very well in their behaviours and interactions.
- Students have many opportunities to voice their opinions and to give feedback on their experiences. As a result of suggestions and feedback from students, managers have put in place a new library and introduced new lunchtime activities.
- Leaders and managers have developed effective partnerships with a number of employers and voluntary organisations. These provide high-quality and relevant work-experience

placements for students. Additionally, employers give an insight into the world of work by making guest speaker visits to the college and by offering students visits to their businesses. Leaders have started arranging supported internship placements with local employers. However, these are at an early stage of development and the arrangements to implement them require further work.

The governance of the provider

- Trustees know the college well and understand its strengths and the areas for improvement. They are highly motivated and demonstrate a strong commitment to success. They have contributed to setting the strategic direction of the college, and fully support the leadership team in pursuing ambitious plans for the future. Since the previous inspection, they have supported the leadership team to make improvements across the college.
- Trustees provide appropriate challenge to senior managers and hold them to account at full board and committee meetings. They use their wide range of expertise and skills well to support key areas of the college, such as safeguarding and the quality of learning. They regularly engage with staff and students to check that the improvements they have supported are having the necessary effect. They take an active part in all aspects of college life and attend student performances and presentations and contribute to the celebration of students' success.
- Trustees value the contributions that the student member of the board brings to their work, and the feedback they receive through the student council. They are proud of the inclusive culture of the college and the achievements of its current and former students.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Students feel safe. They understand potential risks and know what to do if they are worried about themselves or others. They receive an appropriate induction to the college, which includes safeguarding. They take part in a wide range of enrichment and tutorial activities that focus on key safeguarding themes appropriate to their level and ability.
- Leaders, managers and staff respond effectively to any concerns raised. They work closely with external agencies to support safeguarding. Staff signpost students to external support services when appropriate.
- Leaders and managers give all aspects of safeguarding, including health and safety, the highest priority and have effective support arrangements in place. They have implemented the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty well. Students demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. British values are embedded into the values of the college and students and staff demonstrate them throughout the college.
- Managers have safe recruitment procedures in place. All staff, volunteers and trustees receive safeguarding training that is appropriate to their role.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff have high expectations of students. They deliver a diverse and challenging curriculum with a strong focus on developing students' confidence and self-worth. Staff encourage students to challenge themselves to achieve and to develop strong independent living and learning skills.
- The vast majority of teachers use their specialist skills and high-quality resources very effectively to deliver an exciting curriculum. This captures students' interests and helps overcome any barriers to learning. On 'Company Day', professional artists delivered workshops in film-making and song-writing to prepare students for the college's summer production on radicalisation. As a result, students were highly motivated and inspired to create an original piece of theatrical work.
- Teachers identify students' starting points effectively so that they benefit from highly personalised study programmes. Staff use comprehensive information gathered from specialist agencies, parents, carers and local authorities to plan learning programmes. They work closely with well-trained support workers so students gain maximum benefit from the wide variety of activities on offer.
- Students benefit from well-managed and coordinated specialist therapies and support, including speech and language therapy. Staff share information about individual students in daily meetings to ensure that they are all aware of any concerns or new support strategies.
- Teachers make good use of a range of questioning techniques to help students extend their thinking skills and their ability to solve problems. For example, in a vibrant music class, students worked very well together to compose and perform a backing track for a film. The teacher's skilled questioning encouraged a student, acting as director, to get the best possible performances from the other students.
- Students understand what they need to do to improve because of effective feedback from teachers and their peers. Students have measurable and realistic targets for their behaviour and social interactions that teachers often refer to in lessons. However, teachers do not all help students to make the link between a particular activity and their target.
- Students practise and improve their English and mathematical skills well as integral elements of their practical work and performance projects. For example, they improve their spoken English through drama and gain a greater understanding of measurement, volume and area in art projects. However, discrete lessons develop these skills less effectively.
- Staff successfully promote positive behaviour and care for others through all aspects of students' programmes. Students treat each other with respect and consideration and support each other in their learning. Staff promptly challenge and discuss any disagreements between students to ensure that they develop a greater understanding and tolerance of others.
- A small minority of teachers set students a limited range of tasks without considering sufficiently the individual skills they need to develop. They do not use learning resources, including room layout for group work, well enough to make sure that students make the

best possible progress.

- A few teachers are not sufficiently skilled or experienced in managing the work of support assistants. They lack confidence in intervening when assistants become overzealous in supporting students.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Students enjoy learning and are very proud of the skills they develop and the work they create. They become more confident, articulate and self-assured as a result of the effective programme of personal and social development. Students' attendance and behaviour are very good. They work cooperatively to create performance pieces of a high standard.
- Students take part in external work-experience placements once they are sufficiently confident. Students benefit from high-quality work experience relevant to their programme of study or career aspirations. Detailed profiling of each student's interests, level of ability, skills and aspirations leads to careful matching to an appropriate placement. For example, students who want to be dancers or dance teachers have work experience with a dance company. Those who wish to work in theatre or entertainment technology work at a radio station or provide technical support at a local theatre.
- Students also develop good work-related skills in formal sessions and by contributing to college activities. For example, additional activities such as lunchtime clubs, outreach work and community visits help them to develop a sense of responsibility and good timekeeping. As a result, students successfully develop greater independence and gain confidence in communication.
- Students benefit from good specialist therapeutic provision. This includes input from physiotherapists, speech and language and music and art therapists, and counsellors. Staff work together to provide an effective personalised response to need. This helps students to develop their own strategies to manage change, challenge and anxiety.
- Students use a wide range of assistive technologies to work and communicate independently. For example, students specialising in music technology carry out live mixing when recording a band. They use a tablet computer effectively to ensure an appropriate balance of instrumental and vocal lines.
- Students benefit from a comprehensive tutorial programme that supports them to make appropriate lifestyle choices and develop their independence. They are encouraged to make improvements to the college. As a result, they have started a lunchtime support group for those who have mental health problems and a fun Makaton signing song club. These activities improve their confidence, listening skills and wider communication skills.
- Students have access to careers advice and guidance through their tutors and specialist teachers. More recently, a volunteer independent careers adviser has given final-year students impartial advice that has enabled them to explore a greater range of options for their future. The service requires improving to ensure that it benefits all students. The vast majority of students have a clear and realistic idea of what they want to do when they leave college.
- Effective arrangements are in place to support students when they move from college to the next stage in life. This support helps students to sustain their destinations. Former

students often visit the college community and services and act as ambassadors and role models for current students.

- Students benefit from positive strategies that help them to moderate and manage their own behaviour, for example, stress-relieving exercises, moving to a safe, quiet space or volume control strategies.
- Not all students are able to identify the skills they are developing well enough: for example, following a community trip, most students struggled to identify the skills they had developed such as handling money, safe travel, communicating in shops and map reading.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- All students who enter for accredited qualifications achieve equally well; there are no differences in the achievement of different groups of students.
- The vast majority of students progress into independent supported housing and either paid or voluntary employment; the remainder go on to further education or training. Opportunities for students to move on to supported internships are not yet in place.
- The vast majority of students demonstrate well-established performance and technical skills, particularly in music, dance and visual arts. Their standards of work are high.
- Students develop increased confidence and skills that enhance their prospects for employment and independence. The vast majority of students are able to explain how they have developed and what they have learned.
- Nearly all students make the progress expected of them. However, a small minority are not achieving as well as they could.

Provider details

Unique reference number	131950
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	21
Principal	Graham Whitehead
Telephone number	01883 744664
Website	www.orpheus.org.uk

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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	N/A	35	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A	0
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	35							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors	N/A							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of learning, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews to gather the views of students; 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

Judy Lye-Forster, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Margaret Garai

Ofsted Inspector

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