

Horizons College

Independent Specialist College

Inspection dates

1–3 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not routinely good enough. This is particularly the case for students with the highest levels of need. Training provided has not improved the quality of teaching.
- Students in their second or third year of study do not achieve the qualifications in English and mathematics of which they are capable. Senior leaders have only recently started to enter students for these qualifications.
- Senior leaders have not ensured that students receive the full range of specialist therapeutic support identified in their education, health and care plans.
- The use of assessment information is underdeveloped. Activities planned do not develop students' knowledge and skills sufficiently well.
- Senior leaders have only recently introduced an assessment of students' starting points. Consequently, many staff are unclear of the progress some students are making.
- Senior leaders have not made arrangements for students to receive impartial careers advice to enable them to make informed choices.
- Monitoring of classroom practice by managers does not bring about improvement to students' outcomes.

The provider has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and governors are ambitious for students and have been very successful in establishing provision that meets a previously unmet local need.
- External work placements make a significant contribution to students' preparation for employment. Students develop an excellent variety of work-related skills and knowledge.
- All staff foster an inclusive environment in which students learn to respect their peers and others. Teaching staff encourage students to act as disability advocates as they participate in the local community.
- Job coaches are rigorous in implementing health and safety in the workplace. Employers value the information and guidance they receive, including the rigorous risk assessments that identify the support and adjustments that students require.
- Teaching staff and job coaches manage students' behaviour well. Students learn to manage their anxieties so that they can engage in the college and the wider community.
- Staff liaise well with parents and carers. They encourage their active involvement in enabling students to stay safe in their daily lives.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Horizons College is part of Uplands Educational Trust, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, located in Swindon, Wiltshire. The college has two main sites. The college was registered as an approved provider in 2014. It provides specialist education and support for young people aged between 16 and 25 who have a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ranging from those with a high level of need and those for whom employment is a possible outcome.
- At the time of the inspection, 57 students attended the college. Twenty were female and seven were from Black and minority ethnic groups. Most students are recruited locally. The college leaders work mainly with one local authority. The college provides for the very different needs of the student cohort in four groups. These range from those with the highest levels of need to those for whom unsupported employment is a realistic outcome. All students have work experience opportunities and those on the higher-level courses spend around half of their programme on internal or external work placements.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - managers monitor teaching more closely and the findings are used to improve the quality of teaching and students' learning
 - activities implemented focus on the skills and knowledge that students need to learn and the progress they make, rather than on task completion
 - teachers have the specialist knowledge and experience to teach students with the highest level of need, including the application of assistive technologies, through continuing professional development and observation of good practice.
- Implement fully the newly developed baseline assessment process and ensure that the progress of students from their starting points is captured throughout their time at the college.
- Ensure that students receive the specialist therapeutic support identified in their education, health and care plans so that they can improve or maintain their health and their communication skills.
- Make arrangements for students to receive impartial careers advice and guidance so that they can make informed choices about their learning pathways and destinations when leaving the college.
- Ensure that all students for whom it is appropriate are entered for English and mathematics qualifications.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not been successful in ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is routinely good across the provision, particularly on the lower-level courses. Changes to staff have impacted on leaders' ability to secure good teaching and resulted in a decline in the quality of classroom teaching over time.
- Senior leaders and managers carry out observations of teaching on a regular basis. The findings identify areas for improvement and are used to implement a programme of staff development. However, this process is not bringing about better-quality teaching, especially for those students with the greatest levels of need.
- Senior leaders are taking appropriate action in response to poor performance. In particular, they recognise that teachers currently do not have the appropriate specialist knowledge and experience to work with all students, particularly those with the highest levels of need.
- Senior leaders have only recently entered students studying on the highest-level courses for English and mathematics qualifications. They have not ensured that students currently on courses at higher levels, including those in their second and third year of study, have studied for qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Senior leaders have not ensured that all students receive the full extent of specialist therapeutic support, such as speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, as identified in their education, health and care plans. Consequently, the needs of some students are not being fully met.
- Senior leaders have not implemented arrangements to provide impartial careers guidance. Students receive advice during their move into the college from school and in preparation for their transition out of the college, but this is provided by staff employed within the trust and is not impartial. As a result, at times, the guidance offered does not meet students' next steps well enough.
- Senior leaders and governors are ambitious for students and have high expectations of them. Following careful scrutiny of the local provision, they identified significant gaps for students aged 19 years and above. They are very successfully implementing a strategy to develop local provision for students with a very wide range of high needs, and with a strong focus on community engagement and preparation for employment.
- The external work placements, which have increased in number over the year, are a significant strength of the provision. Senior leaders are extremely successful in working with internal partners within the trust, and with external partners including national employers, so that all of the students participate in a very wide range of work placements.
- Senior leaders encourage an environment of inclusion, both within the college and in the wider community. Students respect the staff and each other and learn to recognise the needs and strengths of others. Incidents of bullying and discriminatory behaviour are rare. These values are encouraged within the local community so that students, supported by the staff, act as disability advocates.

The governance of the provider

- The effectiveness of governance over time has been improved by significant changes in membership. The governing body now comprises members with an impressive range of expertise and experience, including finance, business, engineering, further education and safeguarding. Recent minutes of their meetings show that they hold managers to account and require many actions for improvement following their meetings, which they then subsequently check at the next meeting.
- Governors involve themselves in the life of the college well and have introduced link governors for the two main teaching sites. One governor has been particularly helpful in using his own local commercial knowledge and contacts to assist in the expansion of the partnerships with employers, and has successfully raised funds for a minibus. Another has used his engineering and building expertise to assist in the development of further facilities.
- Governors receive appropriate information about safeguarding and are involved in the updating of safeguarding and other key policies. They introduced a policy in response to the Mental Capacity Act (2005), but have not ensured that it is implemented so that the best interests of students with the highest level of need are assessed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders' and governors' very strong focus on aspects of health and safety and staying safe ensures that these are rigorously implemented in the work placements and in the community visits. Parents are informed about the students' training in matters of safety and are encouraged to be vigilant, for example with issues relating to e-safety.
- Staff implement safer recruitment practices diligently, check the suitability of staff and have an appropriate range of policies for safeguarding. Staff understand their roles and are able to discharge their responsibilities effectively. Clear communication lines are available to students. Recent updating on the 'Prevent' duty and the dangers of radicalisation ensures that staff are vigilant about such matters. Teachers cascade these themes through tutorials, and recognise that students with the highest levels of need require more time to understand some of the concepts.
- Senior leaders keep governors informed of incidents, and deal appropriately with any issues. When concerns are identified, they work with the local authority safeguarding team and keep records of the communications.
- Students say they feel safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of classroom teaching, learning and assessment is not routinely good enough. Teachers do not assess and provide for their students' needs well enough, particularly those on the lower-level courses who have the highest levels of need. They set tasks that students cannot complete independently. Support staff often complete the tasks for them or answer questions on their behalf. As a result, the majority of students do not make

progress over time.

- Teachers do not implement activities that develop students' skills, knowledge and understanding effectively. Activities focus instead on task completion, often in line with accreditation requirements. Teachers recognise that students work at different rates and different levels, but do not use this information to adapt learning and meet the needs of students. Too often, they set individual targets based on the number of times students complete a task, rather than by focusing on the learning for each student. The purpose of sessions is not always clear.
- Teachers are not yet all qualified, and none has a specialist qualification in respect of students with high needs. Teachers do not have sufficient specialist expertise or guidance to support students, particularly those who require assistive and adaptive aids in order to participate in learning. For example, specialist equipment such as an eye gaze is not used routinely in all sessions to help students to develop communication skills and use 'voice' more frequently. Teachers do not always use resources and activities that are suitable for adults. For example, they use toys for counting, handouts with paper coins or cutting and sticking activities.
- Teachers do not use information about the students' starting points or the progress they have made in order to plan and provide learning. To date, they have mainly used previous attainment in English and mathematics and school records as assessment criteria. Managers have very recently developed a new baseline assessment process, with a focus on preparing for adulthood, but it is too soon to identify the impact of this on teachers' practice.
- Feedback provided, in line with the agreed assessment policy, is not consistently applied. When teaching, and on a few internal work placements, teachers and job coaches provide large amounts of praise in their verbal feedback to students. However, feedback does not enable students to understand how they could improve further.
- In English and mathematics, teachers do not focus sufficiently on the communication skills of students with the most complex needs in order to equip them for their future lives. However, students in work placements benefit from the opportunity to practise and maintain these skills in realistic settings.
- Students on higher-level courses benefit when teachers expect them to link their internal work experience with their community experiences. In these circumstances, effective questioning enables students to make choices and prompts deeper reflection on their own learning.
- On external work placements, job coaches prompt students to recap on their learning or to problem-solve what they need to do next. Because of the positive relationships with their coaches, students are confident in asking for support and become more confident in carrying out jobs and tasks autonomously. However, on internal work placements, job coaches provide too much support, restricting students' ability to work out for themselves and understand how to complete a task successfully.
- Students on work placements demonstrate their understanding of technical terms well, and can identify health and safety requirements. They can identify and explain the use of appropriate personal professional equipment and its application in different work settings.
- Work placement staff take great care to match placements to students' interests. Time and attention are given to making bespoke arrangements, such as promoting students' interest

in street lights by arranging placements with the local authority street-lighting services.

- Teaching staff and job coaches use a variety of useful methods to reduce students' anxieties and enable them to self-regulate their behaviour. They are good at identifying where tensions are rising and enabling students to leave situations where necessary. Parents recognise the positive change as students learn to manage their own behaviour. Teachers and support staff work well together and record all incidents and the actions they take.
- Staff work very closely with students' families to establish meaningful relationships that enable students to practise and consolidate their skills and knowledge in their daily lives. Staff hold parents' evenings twice a year and communicate with parents daily through the use of individual students' books and weekly via an email plan overview.
- Teaching staff foster an inclusive atmosphere and encourage students to behave respectfully towards each other and to acknowledge the needs of others. The students' council actively challenged stereotyping in football, arguing that both men and women could participate. These strong values help to ensure that any suggested future activities are accessible to all students.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Careers guidance is not developed sufficiently well. Transition arrangements from feeder schools in Year 8 are effective in ensuring that staff know the students well before they join the college. Staff within the trust's feeder school provide careers guidance for the move to the college. However, arrangements are not yet in place for students to receive comprehensive, impartial information on potential pathways when they leave the college.
- Specialist support for students is inconsistent. Too few students receive the amount of therapeutic support they need, as identified in their education, health and care plans and in their individual profiles. This includes speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy. As a result, these students are not adequately supported to maintain and improve their health and well-being.
- Too few students develop their English and mathematics skills sufficiently within their programmes of study and teachers do not promote these skills meaningfully over time. Students with the highest levels of need are not provided with the identified and appropriate technologies to aid effective communication. However, students on external work placements benefit from valuable opportunities to apply and practise their English and mathematics skills successfully.
- Students' attendance is too low.
- The work placement coordinator has developed very effective relationships with local employers, and has increased the number of work opportunities for students significantly during the current year. Students undertaking extended external work placements take pride in their work and develop confidence in their ability to work in a public setting.
- The majority of students who are completing external work placements are making at least the expected levels of progress. They demonstrate an understanding of the skills they have learned and how they will help them to gain paid or voluntary work in the future. For example, tasks for one student working at a local radio station included making appropriate music choices, completing and recording short interviews with music and editing recordings

for transmission on the air. The student was then able to identify what could have improved in his work.

- Employers work well with the college staff to identify potential risks. College staff carry out rigorous risk assessments and share information about students' needs and any adjustments they require to ensure that placements are appropriate. Staff in all settings make sure that students are safe when accessing community locations and work placements. Students develop a good understanding of safe practices within the working environment.
- Senior leaders have developed an effective enrichment and leisure programme. Students benefit from the opportunity to develop friendship groups, keep themselves healthy and improve their behaviour. They attend local leisure facilities such as the gym and, as a result, learn to attend outside college hours in their free time.
- Senior leaders have developed effective partnerships with external groups and organisations to enable students to keep themselves safe from exploitation. A local community-based officer has worked with the students to develop their understanding of different relationships and how to keep safe.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- The organisation of the curriculum does not develop students' English and mathematics knowledge, skills and understanding well enough. Students for whom it is appropriate have not had the opportunity to complete relevant English and mathematics qualifications. Managers have very recently introduced qualifications for these students but, as yet, no students, including those in their second or third year of study, have had time to complete accredited courses.
- Students' progress is too variable. Managers' evaluation of the progress students make from their starting points lacks precision. Teachers' use of assessment information during progress reviews to identify students' next steps in learning and to move learning on is underdeveloped. Managers have recently introduced a new process to assess students' starting points.
- Students on the lower-level courses require too much help to complete tasks. Their learning falters and some do not make good progress over time.
- A few leavers in 2015/16 and 2016/17 exceeded expectations by finding some form of paid or voluntary employment. The great majority of leavers progressed satisfactorily to their intended destination.
- Students on higher-level pathways complete their courses successfully and achieve their qualifications, the large majority of which are at entry level.
- There are no gaps in the achievement of qualifications between students in different groups.
- Students learn to manage their emotions and behaviour well. They enjoy their experience at the college, grow in confidence and become more resilient as a result of the skilled behavioural support in lessons, the work placements and the enrichment programme, which includes topics such as mindfulness.
- Students make very good progress on work placements. This is particularly the case on

external work placements, where they develop their English and mathematics skills, improve their practical understanding of health and safety and learn new skills in practical settings.

Provider details

Unique reference number	141504
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Type of provider	Independent Specialist College
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	52
Principal	Genti Mullaliu
Telephone number	01793 481 493
Website	www.uplandseducationaltrust.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	1	56	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	57							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

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

Inspection team

Joyce Deere, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Kathryn Rudd	Ofsted Inspector
Andrea Dill-Russell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gillian Paterson	Ofsted Inspector

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