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Mr Alan Robinson
Executive Principal
Communication Specialist College - Doncaster
Leger Way
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Dear Mr Robinson

Short inspection of Communication Specialist College - Doncaster

Following the short inspection on 2 and 3 May 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in November 2014.

This provider continues to be good.

You and your staff continue to provide learners with high-quality education. Learners make good progress and achieve their personal and social targets and their vocational qualifications. A high proportion of learners progress to appropriate employment, supported internships, independent living or higher levels of study. Leaders track closely the progress of learners who have left the college, and learners continue to develop the skills that they will need for a successful adult life. The small proportion of learners who go on to study at a higher level gain vocational qualifications and experience that lead to employment in their chosen career, such as in technology, ground maintenance and administration.

Leaders and managers engender a culture of inclusivity; staff work hard to provide a welcoming atmosphere and ensure that learners feel valued. Staff use learners' communication and behaviour plans well, which helps learners to develop effective skills to manage their behaviour. Learners show high levels of respect to peers, staff and visitors.

You and your staff ensure that learners participate in a broad range of enterprise initiatives that benefit the local community. These include the renovation of an old camper van that is used as a mobile cafe in a garden centre, charitable and voluntary work with food banks, and supporting arrangements for the Tour de Yorkshire cycle race. As a result of these activities, learners interact successfully with members of the public, increase their levels of confidence and improve their communication and social skills.

You and your leadership team have made a considerable investment in developing the skills that staff require to meet learners' complex needs, with a strong focus on ensuring that all staff use British sign language well. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and the specialist support that learners receive have continued to improve. Teachers and support staff adapt their activities well to meet learners' needs and, as a result, learners make good progress.

You have improved the recording of learners' progress and introduced an electronic monitoring system. Staff use this well to record learners' targets and the progress that learners make towards achieving their vocational and personal goals. However, teachers do not take sufficient account of learners' specific achievements in lessons to plan subsequent learning that challenges the most able learners to develop their skills to higher level.

You have improved the monitoring of the quality of the provision and introduced frequent scrutiny and reporting at all levels in the organisation. You recognise that there is further work to do to ensure that all learners fully develop the work-related or independent living skills of which they are capable.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective and continue to be a priority. Staff take appropriate actions to safeguard learners. As a result, learners are safe while attending college and when participating in external activities.

Leaders have successfully implemented risk assessments and actions required to meet the 'Prevent' duty. Staff receive regular updates on safeguarding issues, such as child protection, abuse and honour-based crime to ensure that they can spot early signs of concern. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding, and they know who they should report safeguarding issues to if they arise. Managers have good links with the Local Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards and other agencies, including the local authority and mental health services.

Leaders, managers and staff effectively support learners to consider their own safety and well-being. Learners benefit from useful workshops run by staff and external services that cover topics such as e-safety, understanding relationships, sexual health and well-being. Learners have an appropriate understanding of radicalisation and extremism and can explain the importance of keeping themselves safe when using social media and the dangers from online fraud. They demonstrate a good awareness of personal health and safety, including the need to wear personal protective equipment during practical lessons and the importance of moving safely around the campus. Members of the student council frequently share their views with staff during health and safety meetings, and leaders act swiftly in response to feedback; for example, they improved the access door to the on-site gymnasium.

Inspection findings

- Governors know the college well and they effectively support the leadership team to shape its strategic direction and ensure its sustainability within the parent company group, Doncaster Deaf Trust. They are committed to providing learners with high-quality provision. They challenge leaders and managers to improve learners' achievements, ensure that support is of high quality, and use funding and resources effectively. As a result, learners benefit from very good facilities and highly skilled staff.
- Leaders and managers have successfully established high-quality vocational study programmes for learners who have high needs. They work well with employers, community agencies, specialist services and the local authority to provide an appropriate curriculum and effective support that meet the diverse and complex needs of learners. They have increased significantly the number of learners who take part in external work experience. Learners secure work experience with a broad range of employers such as hotels, cafes, print services, schools and sport clubs, and placements are closely matched to learners' career aims. Learners access a range of college and community-led activities to help them to become more independent. These include learning to cook healthy meals, completing everyday cleaning skills, and independent travel. The activities help learners to prepare well for adult life and appropriate employment.
- Staff assess most learners' starting points well using comprehensive assessments, and they set challenging personal goals that reflect learners' aspirations. Staff use the information about learners' starting points well in lessons to ensure that visual resources help learners to take in relevant information, structure their thoughts and support their decision-making. Staff develop learners' communication skills effectively in lessons through, for example, ensuring that learners expand on their answers to questions and use correct terminology. Learners undertaking work experience in retail develop effective communication strategies to help them interact with non-signing customers in the stores. As a result, learners develop their self-confidence and communication skills well, which helps them to make good progress and prepares them very effectively for adult life.
- Leaders provide a sensory and enterprising learning environment that helps learners to develop good vocational and practical skills. Learners use high-quality software applications, resources and equipment that help them to develop the skills that they need for work. For example, they use joinery tools confidently to make marketable coffee tables. Business administration learners study in a working office where they use industry-standard equipment to complete real work tasks. Learners make good progress towards achieving their personal and work ambitions.
- Most learners make good progress in developing their English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. For example, in mathematics they define what the word 'capacity' means in relation to volume. In construction lessons, learners can explain why they use a datum line to ensure that the floor is laid level. In English lessons, teachers encourage learners to respond to feedback and develop their written work, including the correction of

spelling and punctuation. Learners use ICT competently and produce documents in a variety of formats with a high standard of presentation and accuracy. Learners fully understand the importance of developing ICT skills for their everyday lives and work. In too many vocational lessons, however, teachers do not develop learners' awareness of how they can use their English and mathematics skills in their future work roles and in their personal lives.

- Learners receive good careers advice and guidance from staff and benefit from comprehensive discussions about their next steps. However, they do not have access to impartial careers education and guidance and as a result, they are often not aware of all the opportunities available to them when they leave the college.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers support all learners to develop fully the work skills and independent living skills of which they are capable
- teachers plan learning that consistently challenges the most able learners to develop their skills to a higher level
- teachers on vocational courses improve learners' awareness of how they can use their English and mathematics skills in their future work roles and in their personal lives
- they develop opportunities for learners to access impartial careers advice and guidance so that learners understand the broad range of options available to them as they leave the college.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracey Mace-Akroyd
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors were assisted by the assistant principal, as nominee. They met with the executive principal, governors, leaders, teachers, learning support staff and learners. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment. They reviewed key documents, including those in which leaders evaluate the quality of provision and standards of learning, and the college's evidence of safeguarding.