

St John's College

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates

16–18 October 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

- Governors and leaders have taken decisive action that has led to improvements throughout the college. As a result, the effectiveness of leadership and management and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are good.
- Governors, leaders and managers are ambitious for the college and for all its learners. They set high expectations and have a clear vision for the future.
- Learners benefit from a rich and creative curriculum that provides opportunities for self-expression and enterprise.
- Learners develop the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to move on to their next steps and to become more independent in their everyday lives.
- The vast majority of learners achieve their vocational qualifications and progress to the next level or move into employment.
- Teachers know their learners well and accurately assess their starting points. They set meaningful, relevant and challenging development goals for learners.
- Learners benefit from high-quality support for their healthcare needs. They develop their independence and self-advocacy and take increasing levels of responsibility for their own well-being.
- Learners receive excellent support to manage their own behaviour. They recognise when they are becoming anxious and learn strategies that help them deal with their concerns.
- Learners benefit from an extensive enrichment programme. They learn to take part in community-based projects and understand the needs of others.
- Measures taken by specialist outreach staff to deal with barriers to learning, experienced by learners who have mental health needs, are very effective.
- Too few learners achieve qualifications in mathematics.

Full report

Information about the provider

- St John's College is an independent specialist college of further education in Brighton, for young people aged 19 to 25, that offers residential and day provision. It is part of St John's School and College. At the time of this inspection, 76 students, from 27 local authorities, studied at the college.
- The majority of the learners have complex learning disabilities, including difficulties with learning because of social, emotional and mental health needs, autistic spectrum disorder, Asperger's syndrome and Down's syndrome, pathological demand avoidance and other co-morbid conditions. The overwhelming majority of learners work at or below level 1 and over half are residential.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should make sure that staff demonstrate a full understanding of, and are familiar with, the new systems and processes, so that all benefit from them and teachers use them in their everyday practice for the benefit of learners.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that teachers improve the way they plan and monitor learners' development of English, mathematical and information communication technology (ICT) skills during work placements and work-related activities.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that teachers improve the development of learners' mathematical skills across the curriculum, so that more of them achieve their mathematics qualifications.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Governors, leaders and managers are ambitious for the organisation and for all its learners. They have a clear vision for the future and know what they need to do to achieve it. Working in partnership with many local authorities, leaders make sure that the provision meets the very specific needs of learners who have a diverse range of highly complex needs. The curriculum is vocationally focused and gives many learners the chance to gain jobs and develop independence.
- Governors' appointments of a new chief executive officer and principal have given the college leadership team the determination and impetus to drive improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and to sustain learners' outcomes at a high level. Leaders and managers effectively evaluate the quality of the provision and the learner experience. They accurately identify the key areas for improvement. They put in place specific and measurable actions to secure improvements promptly.
- Leaders and managers have improved the process by which they evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, feedback and support for teachers are more developmental and encourage teachers to be more innovative in their practice. Managers provide professional development for teachers and learning support workers that meets individual needs, and is flexible and responsive. They make sure that it is sharply focused on learners' progress. Staff benefit from the chance to take accredited qualifications and to develop their leadership and management skills through a programme of management training. As a result, staff are highly motivated and seek opportunities to take on greater responsibility and gain promotion.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have improved recruitment and induction processes for new teachers. They now benefit from a comprehensive induction that helps them to work better with learners and learning support workers. As a result, learners benefit from well-trained and well-informed teachers who understand them and can meet their specific needs.
- Leaders and managers set high expectations for staff and promote high standards in all aspects of teaching, learning and skills development. Leaders introduced robust performance management measures that ensure that they maintain high standards, and that staff receive full support to improve the quality of their work. When teachers do not meet the standards expected, leaders use clear and structured competency or disciplinary processes to good effect.
- Leaders and managers maintain excellent relationships with partner colleges, community groups, voluntary organisations and employers. These partners provide opportunities for learners to take alternative programmes of study, work-based learning and work experience placements outside the college. These include programmes of study at levels 2 and 3 at two further education colleges, placements with the radio station of the local hospital and opportunities for students to work with members of the public in catering and hospitality venues. Leaders have also recently secured long-term employment opportunities for learners through a successful bid with the local council to run a café.
- Good and effective impartial careers advice and guidance support most learners to plan their future effectively. Enrichment and extra-curricular activities extend the experiences

of learners and raise their aspirations. Most learners, for whom it is appropriate, benefit from a range of work experience placements and work-related learning, which align well with their interests or career aims. For example, learners who wish to work in the performing arts take placements at the local theatre and those interested in working in hospitality work in customer-facing and food preparation roles.

- Staff promote diversity effectively. As a result, learners demonstrate mutual respect and tolerance. Behaviour is very good. Activities for learners promote a good understanding of their responsibilities and contribution to society. Staff and learners model the college's values and behaviours well.
- Leaders and managers give high priority to developing learners' English and mathematical skills. Managers have improved the baseline assessment, so that it accurately informs the individual targets that learners receive. All learners take an accredited programme in English and mathematics at a level appropriate to their ability. Leaders and managers have accurately identified that learners' English skills improve faster than their mathematical skills, which continue to require development.
- Leaders have improved college systems and processes to support teachers to teach and learners to learn. However, not all staff are fully confident in the use of these systems. For example, staff are just beginning to see the benefits and applications of some of the new ICT equipment that leaders have purchased to support learning.

The governance of the provider

- Governors know the college well and understand its strengths and weaknesses. Since the previous inspection, they have appointed a new senior leadership team and supported the restructure of the middle management team. As a result, the leadership is strong and strategic and has a clear focus on placing the learner at the centre of all decision making.
- Governors provide proper challenge to senior leaders and hold them to account through the effective scrutiny of reports and key performance indicators. In addition, they carry out several monitoring activities, such as visits to speak to learners and staff and to observe learning. They use these opportunities to confirm the standards of provision and to check the learner experience. They use their wide range of expertise and skills well to support key aspects of the college, such as safeguarding and finance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Learners feel safe at the college and know how to recognise risks in the community and online. They have learned the steps to take to keep themselves safe. Learners take part in a range of enrichment and tutor activities that focus on key safeguarding themes, appropriate to their level of understanding. Learners know the support available to them and know whom to speak to, should they have any concerns. Staff respond effectively to any issues raised and work closely with external agencies to meet specific needs.
- Governors, leaders and managers place a very high priority on the safety and well-being of learners, staff and visitors. They embed British values well into the ethos of the college, and learners and staff demonstrate British values throughout the college and in the workplace.

- Staff recruitment procedures are effective and include a comprehensive scrutiny of the suitability of candidates. Staff receive safeguarding training and regular updates appropriate to their role. Health and safety arrangements are effective in the college and for off-site activities and work placements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Teachers know their learners well and gather a broad range of information to assess their starting points effectively. They identify each learner's knowledge, skills and understanding. They then set suitable learning goals for each learner that promote the next stage of her or his practical and academic development. Teachers set work with an appropriate level of challenge.
- Most learners receive helpful feedback, so that they know what they need to do to improve. The verbal feedback teachers give is particularly effective. Learners act on this feedback straight away and apply it to the tasks they are undertaking. Teachers and learning support workers use questioning skilfully to check that learners have understood topics. They also use questioning to encourage learners to reflect on the standards of their own work. As a result, learners enjoy their learning and recognise the progress they are making.
- Learners make good progress in developing their communication skills, and staff are skilled at meeting their individual communication needs. Learners receive processing time and, where appropriate, staff break down and give slower instructions to support learning. As a result, learners build their confidence and develop their ability to interact effectively. Many staff are confident in using a range of communication and language programmes, which they employ to good effect.
- The vast majority of learners make good progress in developing their practical and vocational skills. As a result, they demonstrate these in a range of settings. For example, a group of learners have formed a band and play different instruments with great skill. Vocational teachers are subject specialists and have excellent industrial knowledge, which they use to support learners to develop good practical skills.
- Most learners improve their mathematical skills during their practical learning. For example, in one horticulture class, learners counted sprigs of rosemary and sorted vegetables into categories. In a woodwork class, learners measured pieces of wood accurately to make a frame. Not all learners are able to transfer these skills successfully into their formal mathematics learning. Consequently, not enough learners achieve their accredited qualifications in mathematics.
- Most learners benefit from learning activities that challenge them and support them to remain focused on their learning. Teachers set them individual learning goals that match their stage of skills development and their level of understanding well. In a small minority of cases, teachers set learners goals that are too broad and do not support them to understand exactly what they need to do. As a result, teachers are unable to measure accurately the progress that learners make towards these goals.
- Learners who have an interest in, or aptitude for, a vocational area of study take courses at two further education colleges that partner with St John's College. At the time of this

inspection, six learners attended courses in digital media, art and design, land-based studies and professional cookery. Their attendance on these programmes stretches them academically and vocationally and extends their personal and social development. However, tutors at St John's do not share learners' targets in English, mathematics and ICT routinely with college tutors.

- Staff inform learners and their parents and carers well of the progress that learners make. They all take an active role in setting targets through the robust annual review process. Parents and carers receive frequent updates through daily handover books, email and telephone communication, termly consultation meetings and end-of-year reports. Parents and carers praise the highly effective communication they receive and value the formal and informal channels that are open to them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners enjoy college life and speak positively about their experiences. They are proud of what they achieve and are pleased to demonstrate their skills and explain why they are doing what they are doing. They communicate effectively with peers and staff and show high levels of respect. Learners' behaviour is excellent. They are polite and friendly to each other and work well in teams when needed.
- Learners' attendance at college is high. Managers and tutors monitor this well and put in place appropriate measures to increase attendance where needed. For example, when learners who have mental health needs face barriers to attending often, the outreach team puts in place specialist support and takes the learning to the learner in flexible ways. As a result, these learners develop confidence and most of them show increased attendance at, and participation in, their course.
- Learners develop skills that help them prepare for life beyond college. In practical sessions, they show high levels of perseverance and engagement. They develop their skills and independence by using services in the local community, for example by shopping and using leisure facilities. Because of effective training and support, many learners access community services, independently or semi-independently, for the first time.
- Learners benefit from a range of high-quality resources and facilities that provide realistic work environments. These help them to practise and secure their skills in a safe environment before they go on their work placements and demonstrate the skills they have developed.
- Most learners have work experience placements or work-related activities in the college or, when appropriate, in local businesses. For example, at college, learners work on reception, in the café and in administrative roles. External work placements include taking part in horticultural activities, working in catering and hospitality venues and working in the library. However, teachers do not effectively capture the progress that learners make in developing their English, mathematical and ICT skills during these placements and activities.
- Learners benefit from a range of enrichment activities that extend their personal and social skills. Community projects help learners to take on teamwork challenges, and fund-raising projects help them to understand and appreciate the needs of others in the

community. As a result, learners develop confidence to take part in group activities with a range of people and to attend different settings, including workplaces and social events.

- Specialist support professionals, for example speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists, work effectively with staff from the college. Learners benefit from this specialist input to increase their independence at managing their own needs and advocating for themselves. Learners also access sensory play activities that help them learn relaxation techniques that promote their emotional well-being. Most learners follow safe working practices when working in practical sessions. They follow safety instructions and instructions to wear appropriate personal protective equipment. A very small minority of learners need more support from teachers to remember their food safety rules.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- The vast majority of learners make at least the progress expected of them, and many make better progress. Learners develop the skills, knowledge and understanding to move on to more complex tasks or higher levels of learning. Most learners produce work of a high standard.
- The vast majority of learners, for whom it is appropriate, achieve a range of accredited vocational qualifications. Learners' achievement of basic skills qualifications in English is very good. Too few learners complete qualifications in mathematics.
- The very large majority of learners make good progress toward their individual incremental learning goals and their targets for the development of personal, social and communication skills. These include the development of their skills in English, mathematics and ICT.
- Learners receive good preparation for their life after college and become more independent in their everyday lives. Most learners achieve their planned destination as appropriate to their level of independence and aspiration. Learners move into further education, or into supported living with structured activities, or into voluntary or paid employment.

Provider details

Unique reference number	132016
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	90
Principal	Karen Grist
Telephone number	01273 244000
Website	www.st-johns.co.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+
	-	71	-	4	-	1	-	-
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	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	76							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Plumpton College Brighton Metropolitan College							

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 inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and parents; 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
Ben Walsh	Ofsted Inspector
Bernie White	Ofsted 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 2018