

# Royal Mencap Society

Independent Specialist College

## Inspection dates

25–28 June 2019

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers do not have sufficient data on learners' and apprentices' attendance and progress and fail to make timely interventions when attendance is poor.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that teachers have the qualifications and knowledge to help apprentices and learners to develop their English and mathematics skills.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that learners and apprentices have impartial careers advice to enable them to plan for their futures.
- Apprentices and learners generally know how to stay safe; however, teachers have not ensured that they have sufficient understanding of the potential dangers of all aspects of grooming by people who may put them at risk.
- Teachers do not consider sufficiently learners' individual needs, so they fail to develop their knowledge and understanding as well as they could.
- The proportion of learners on traineeships who stay to the end of the programme, although increasing, is still too low.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Job coaches provide very high-quality support in the workplace. They make adjustments that enable apprentices and learners to participate effectively, manage their anxieties and become more independent.
- Trustees and managers have implemented a very ambitious strategy to establish national employment programmes for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Managers have developed a large number of partnerships with employers across the country, resulting in very effective work placements.
- Apprentices and learners develop good social communication skills. They learn to travel independently, behave appropriately in the workplace and lead healthy lives.
- Learners on supported internship programmes progress well, with just over half of leavers finding full- or part-time paid employment.
- Apprentices and learners develop good vocational skills so they are prepared for employment or further learning.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- The Royal Mencap Society is a national charity with headquarters in Islington, London. The society started to offer provision as an independent specialist college in September 2017. The Royal Mencap Society currently provides three separate employment programmes, known as The Three Ships, based in the lifestyles and work team. The Three Ships comprise traineeships for 19- to 24-year-olds, level 2 apprenticeships across the age ranges in customer service practitioner and retailing, and supported internships. Traineeships are offered three times a year. All learners have a learning difficulty and/or disability or autism spectrum disorder. Those on supported internships all have education, health and care (EHC) plans. The society provides a range of other employment programmes, but these were not in scope for this inspection.
- The provision is nationwide. Nine locality managers and two regional managers manage the provision. The Royal Mencap Society receives funding from a large number of local authorities.

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Implement robust arrangements to capture data about attendance and the progress of apprentices and learners.
- Implement the current plans to make sure more teachers are qualified to a higher level, and that all those who teach English and mathematics achieve suitable qualifications so they are more confident in teaching apprentices and learners.
- Provide learners with impartial careers guidance so they have a better understanding about their future destinations.
- Support teachers to develop their teaching skills so that they meet the learning needs of all learners and apprentices.
- Improve the assessment of learners' suitability for the traineeship programme, so that learners are on the right programme.
- Ensure that information about staying safe from the dangers of grooming, for example by people of extremist views, is reinforced during the programme, so that learners and apprentices understand its relevance in their communities and the workplace.
- Ensure that teachers on the supported internship programme include all the outcomes identified on the EHC plans, so they can capture learners' progress towards all of these in addition to their planned destination.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders' and managers' actions to raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have not resulted in teaching and learning that consistently meet the needs of individual learners. A high level of staff turnover among teachers and job coaches has meant that progress has been slower than anticipated.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that trainees and apprentices are following a mathematics and English programme that is sufficiently challenging. They have recently introduced a mathematics and English strategy that includes training in functional skills for the many teaching staff who do not have qualifications at level 2 or higher. However, this is in the early stages of implementation and not all teaching, training and coaching staff are confident to teach these subjects. Consequently, the quality of teaching of English and mathematics is not good enough.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that learners and apprentices receive impartial careers guidance. Teaching and coaching staff provide learners with helpful information and guidance about topics such as benefits and local provision, but learners are not fully aware of the range of possible job and career choices.
- Leaders and managers do not use data to enable them to make interventions with learners and apprentices early enough where required. They do not collate attendance data and staff do not have accurate information about apprentices' and learners' progress.
- Trustees and leaders have successfully implemented an ambitious strategy to develop training programmes that enable young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to find paid employment and to be valued alongside their peers. Within a short timescale they have made good use of The Royal Mencap Society's regional offices to develop provision across the country.
- Leaders and managers have established very effective partnership arrangements with a large number of local authorities and employers to provide work placements of varying lengths in order to meet learners' and apprentices' individual needs. They successfully seek employers whose businesses match the interests of learners, for example in hotels or theatres. They prepare employers for the placements by providing disability awareness training to their staff.
- Leaders and managers have focused very effectively on preparation for employment as the basis of the curriculum. In addition, they have ensured that learners have the opportunity to gain a range of other skills such travel training, managing money and engaging with the public, alongside the work placements.
- Leaders and managers have identified areas for improvement well as a result of feedback from staff and learners from all of the regions and at all levels. They have developed comprehensive arrangements to audit the quality of the work across the country and improve the quality of provision, but this is in the early stages of development.
- Leaders and managers have successfully fostered an inclusive culture across the provision. All staff encourage a climate of respect and tolerance, and managers are careful in selecting employers who share these values. Many employers say that they now

have a better understanding of learning difficulties and/or disabilities and autism spectrum disorder as a result of the work placements.

### **The governance of the provider**

- Trustees have been very successful in steering and developing the employment provision, in line with Royal Mencap Society's strategic plan and vision. They took extensive soundings of the views of people with a learning difficulty and/or disability when developing their strategy, and listened to their views to help shape the provision.
- Trustees bring a wealth of experience to the provision. They visit regional sites and report back to the committees. They hold leaders and managers to account, and monitor thoroughly the effectiveness of the national strategy, assessing risks and intervening when necessary. They have recommended changes as a result of their visits and audits.
- Trustees correctly recognise that the current reporting arrangements need revising, so that the focus on education is much stronger, and has a greater representation within the charity.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers have ensured that staff training includes a comprehensive range of policies at induction, and they provide staff with timely updates. Managers check that the staff they recruit are safe to work with learners.
- Staff across the regions focus well on ensuring health and safety in the workplace. They carry out risk assessments of workplaces, and emphasise learners' ability to stay safe both at work and at home. Learners know how to stay safe in the workplace. Safeguarding incidents are rare. Staff respond to these appropriately, and inform trustees.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- Too few staff are qualified in teaching, learning and assessment at a high enough level. They have relevant experience of disability, with many having worked in the care industry, but most are not sufficiently skilled in teaching English and mathematics. As a result, they are not able to support learners sufficiently with their English and mathematics skills and learners are not gaining qualifications in these subjects.
- Teachers do not always take sufficient account of the needs of all learners in theory teaching. They do not challenge the most able learners sufficiently or reinforce key aspects of learning for less able learners. Teachers devise tasks that are too complex and use language that is not appropriate for all learners.
- On the supported internship programme staff do not use the outcomes in the EHC plans well enough. They set clear, long-term outcomes, but they do not always include the outcomes identified in the EHC plans. As a result, records fail to show learners' progress towards all aspects of EHC plan outcomes, although aspirations for their destinations are clear. Staff do not consistently make sure that targets are specific enough to help learners to make incremental progress.

- Although improving, staff are not sufficiently rigorous in assessing accurately whether learners on traineeships are suitable for the programme. Consequently, too many learners are not on the right programme and withdraw early. Staff do not take apprentices' previous learning fully into consideration when planning training, so apprentices sometimes repeat skills they have already completed successfully.
- Staff do not mark written work rigorously enough or provide guidance on how to improve. They do not routinely correct spelling and grammar errors. In these cases, learners continue to make the same errors and are not clear what they need to do to improve.
- Staff are enthusiastic and know the learners well. They use this knowledge to plan highly individual employment programmes. They plan off-the-job sessions that effectively link with the learners' and apprentices' work placements. They prepare learners well for work placements.
- Job coaches collaborate effectively with employers and learners so that learning programmes meet the learners' and the employers' requirements. They ensure that learners are placed with employers in welcoming environments. Employers make reasonable adjustments to shift patterns, hours of work and job roles that enable learners to participate successfully.
- Learners settle quickly and become more confident. Job coaches provide good individual support to learners at the employment sites and during off-the-job training. Learners soon feel comfortable in the new work environments and become ready to learn new skills. Learners and apprentices make good progress in developing their vocational skills and gradually become more independent in the workplace.
- Staff are thorough in assessing learners' progress in the workplace. They use a range of assessment methods, depending on individual learners' needs, to assess knowledge, understanding and skills development. Learners who struggle with written work value having their work assessed through the use of videos and audio recordings. Staff regularly discuss progress with employers and learners. They keep parents or carers well informed where appropriate.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Learners are well-behaved, polite and respectful to each other, staff and visitors. They support one another well during off-the-job training and develop friendships.
- Learners enjoy their studies and the variety of work experiences such as working in hotels, charity shops, retail outlets, and green gyms. They develop a good understanding of what employers are looking for, such as punctuality and attention to detail. They improve their personal hygiene and time keeping, and they learn about their rights and responsibilities as an employee.
- Learners say they feel safe and know who to contact if they have any concerns. They understand how to keep safe when using digital devices and social media. For example, they understand the importance of not disclosing personal information, sending images, or engaging in online conversation with strangers. They know about health and safety in the workplace, follow employers' safety requirements and keep themselves and others safe.
- Learners are clear about job requirements on work placements. They develop good

employability skills such as how to conduct themselves at interviews. Learners are proud of learning to travel independently and report that it has changed their lives for the better.

- Learners develop their confidence well and grow in self-belief and self-esteem as they achieve more knowledge and skills. Learners who have been anxious in previous settings become calm and more resilient. They gain skills in communicating and working with the public in customer service, serving in hospitality and attending meetings. Learners gain skills in working independently and are confident to ask colleagues if they are unsure of anything.
- Learners develop positive attitudes to learning and work. In the workplace they are professional and demonstrate appropriate conduct. Employers comment on the way learners set a good example in the workplace. They develop good skills that are valuable to employers. Employers value the learners and speak highly of the way they enhance their businesses.
- Learners gain a good understanding of how to manage their money and lead healthy lives. They gain an understanding of healthy eating, the importance of keeping fit and healthy sleep patterns. Learners are able to identify and explain how smoking, eating a high fat diet and not getting enough sleep affects a person's well-being.
- Learners develop their social communication skills well. They rise to the challenge of conversing with the general public and their colleagues. They improve their confidence in communicating with people they do not know.
- Most learners know about risks to their safety, but they do not have enough understanding of the dangers of all possible aspects of radicalisation and extremism other than on digital media. Too many learners cannot recall the guidance that staff provided at the start of their programmes.
- Although staff regularly give general advice and guidance, they do not ensure that learners and apprentices have sufficient access to specialist impartial information, advice and guidance. They do not have transition plans that detail actions for their future careers or next steps.

### Outcomes for learners

### Requires improvement

- Too many learners on traineeships did not complete their programmes in 2017/18, and only around a third in line with their aspirations. However, the proportion of those who stay on their programme has increased. The six learners who finished their programme the week before the inspection progressed to full or part-time employment outcomes, including an apprenticeship.
- Too few learners achieve their qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Apprentices make slow progress, and of those who have completed their programmes not enough did so in the planned time.
- Staff do not know what all learners who leave the programme go on to do. They do not know if they have found sustainable employment.
- Following effective management action, the proportion of learners who remain in learning

on supported internships has improved significantly, and is now high.

- Around two thirds of learners who completed the supported internship programme in 2017/18 progressed to full- or part-time employment, and a quarter to further training. The few apprentices who have completed the programme are in work.
- Learners on all programmes develop good social communication skills in the workplace by interacting with members of the public. They become more independent and learn to travel independently. They develop an understanding of the requirements of employment, such as time-keeping, dressing appropriately and responding to instructions and job tasks.
- Learners in work placements develop standards of working that prepare them well for their futures.

## Types of provision

### Apprenticeships

### Requires improvement

- Fourteen apprentices are currently supported in London, Manchester, Peterborough, South Yorkshire and Cannock. They are studying customer service practitioner and retailer at level 2. Apprenticeships are planned and managed to meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. Almost all apprentices are recruited externally and complete a rigorous selection process and work trial before enrolment.
- Leaders and managers do not have reliable systems in place to supply concise information about off-the-job training hours, apprentices' progress, attendance and punctuality. As a result, leaders and managers do not have enough knowledge about how well the apprentices are progressing and too many do not achieve in the planned time.
- Too many apprentices are in work that does not provide secure permanent employment. Staff provide limited careers guidance and support to help apprentices find alternative work.
- Training staff do not have sufficient skills and understanding of how to develop apprentices' English and mathematics skills beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship standards.
- Job coaches and apprentices negotiate useful targets and update individual learning plans every four weeks. In most cases, the line manager agrees the targets and work activities required to ensure that the apprentice makes continued progress before the next visit.
- Job coaches provide comprehensive support to enable apprentices to overcome barriers to learning, such as high levels of anxiety. Apprentices quickly develop a good range of personal, life and work skills and behaviours, including how to stay safe online. Employers value the contribution apprentices make at work. They attend well and develop professional behaviours. For example, apprentices who lacked confidence and self-esteem are now meeting new people and carrying out fundraising activities.
- The vast majority of apprentices are fully aware of the end-point assessment and their target grades. Assessors prepare them well through practice assessments and professional discussions. As a result, the small number who have completed achieved their target grades.



## Traineeships

## Requires improvement

- Currently, 22 learners are studying traineeships in London and Northampton. The week prior to inspection six learners left, having completed the programme. Learners mainly follow a 13-week programme, with flexibility for up to six months.
- Staff do not carry out sufficiently robust assessments of learners' suitability for the programme before they enrol. Consequently, too many learners do not complete the programme, because it is not appropriate for them. Staff have not ensured that learners receive impartial careers guidance.
- Teachers do not take sufficient consideration of the different abilities and previous attainment of trainees in learning sessions. They do not ensure that all learners are working with an appropriate level of challenge and they do not check all learners' understanding. Consequently, learners do not always gain as much knowledge and understanding as they could.
- Leaders and managers do not provide learners with sufficient opportunities to take units or full qualifications in English and mathematics as appropriate for their attainment. As a result, they are not sufficiently helped to improve and prepare for their next steps.
- Staff provide learners with detailed feedback on their individual progress. As a result, they are clear what targets they are achieving and what targets they are still working towards and need to achieve.
- Job coaches provide very effective support for learners during their work placements, which enables them to make the transition into a work environment and to overcome any initial anxieties. Most staff encourage learners to reduce the amount of support that they need to enable them to become independent in their work placements.
- Staff make sure that work placements provide learners with a good range of vocational possibilities, for example in an arts organisation, with a London council, in warehousing, in clerical work, in retail work and in care homes.
- Trainees develop a good range of work skills in their work placements, and the small cohort of learners who have just completed progressed well to employment.

## Provision for learners with high needs

## Requires improvement

- Currently 94 learners are studying supported internships in London, Oxford, Bristol, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and West Yorkshire.
- The attendance of learners on supported internships is too low. Although attendance is improving, learners do not make the progress they could because they do not attend well enough. A small minority of learners have not engaged in work placements, in line with programme requirements. The length of time some learners spend on work placements is not sufficient.
- Managers have not ensured that learners are provided with opportunities to take accredited English and mathematics qualifications that would help them progress to further learning or full-time employment. Of the few learners who take formal English and mathematics qualifications, too few achieve them.



- Managers have not ensured that learners have impartial careers advice to help them plan their futures.
- Teachers have not ensured that the tasks and activities they set are sufficiently challenging for all of the learners in the group, particularly in English and mathematics. Managers have not ensured that teachers in all centres are able to teach or integrate English and mathematics at a high enough level.
- Although staff set regular long- and short-term targets, these are not always sufficiently based on outcomes in learners' EHC plans. Many targets are too general and do not identify key areas that individual learners need to improve further, including English and mathematics targets.
- Job coaches provide well-planned, high-quality support in the workplace and in off-the-job learning sessions. They enable learners to improve their work readiness, increase their independence and confidence, and overcome individual barriers to learning.
- Staff review and record learners' progress and achievement well, using evidence sources that include learner self-assessment, employer feedback and photographic evidence of work.
- Learners gain a good understanding of using the internet and staying healthy. For example, learners were able to access an online job site and search for specific jobs using various filters and key words. They were able to explain the importance of keeping fit and maintaining a healthy diet and to explain the effects of smoking and drinking alcohol on a person's health and well-being.
- Learners have a sound awareness of how to stay safe. They know who to contact if they have any issues, including in the workplace. They understand the risks posed by accessing online platforms including social media. They can explain the precautions required to stay safe, such as not engaging in conversation with strangers and not disclosing personal information and passwords. However, they recall little from their induction about the potential dangers posed by different types of extremism.
- Learners demonstrate good behaviour, positive attitudes to their learning, and professional conduct in the workplace. Staff have established and maintained positive working relationships with their learners and there are high levels of respect between learners, staff and employers.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	144786
Type of provider	Independent Specialist College
Age range of learners	16–18 and 19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	154
Principal	Jason Hardman
Telephone number	07766 776335
Website	<a href="http://www.mencap.org.uk">www.mencap.org.uk</a>

## 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)	-	94	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	14	-	-	-			
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		22		22			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	108							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of lifestyles and work team, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. 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. Inspectors visited regional sites across the country. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

Joyce Deere, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Penny Mathers	Ofsted Inspector
Neil Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Lyn Bourne	Ofsted Inspector
Kathleen Tyler	Ofsted Inspector
Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector

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