

# Aurora Boveridge College

Monitoring visit report

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

From autumn 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to independent specialist colleges newly ESFA-funded from August 2018 onwards. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the Further Education and Skills Inspection Handbook, especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Aurora Boveridge College is a day and residential independent specialist college for young people aged 16 to 25 years old. Most students have autism spectrum conditions and/or anxiety, social and emotional or mental health needs. Many have not attended mainstream education for a number of years. At the monitoring visit, 46 students attended the college. Of those, 14 were residential students. Students who are unable to attend the college site due to high anxieties can access a bespoke outreach service that supports their re-engagement in learning. The college is located in an area of outstanding natural beauty within 16 acres of listed gardens.

### Themes

#### **How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant learning programmes that are clearly defined and tailored to suit the individual needs of learners?      Significant progress**

Leaders have very high expectations of what students can achieve. They provide a flexible curriculum that goes well beyond qualifications. For example, leaders introduced a level 3 mathematics programme for those who love mathematics as well as for those aspiring to A-level mathematics. For those students who find attending the college challenging, leaders provide successful, individualised programmes in student's homes and communities. These help them to develop confidence and a desire to learn again. Students undertake additional activities to widen their understanding of the community such as running a Christmas stall for charity, recycling events and being part of the student council.

Leaders ensure that teachers and support staff are exacting when linking the curriculum directly to outcomes in students' education, health and care (EHC) plans. Where these are not sufficiently ambitious, they challenge local authorities and adapt students' goals so that they achieve their best outcome.

Working relationships between teaching, support and therapeutic staff are highly effective. They provide individualised, high-quality and sustainable support that helps students to be ambitious and successful in achieving their goals. Most students move

on to live independent lives and/or attend further training. A few gain full-time, paid employment. Students can access the on-site therapy team whenever they need. Where staff hear students discussing topical and relevant issues in the common room, such as Brexit and 'extinction rebellion', they work together to provide further information on these topics through tutorial sessions.

Leaders use high-needs funding very effectively. Most students find the rural location of the college conducive to their learning and development. The extensive grounds help students to manage their anxieties and participate in outdoor activities. Learning is not restricted to formal sessions. It takes place in carefully designed activities around the college, for example during recreational baking sessions and therapy dog walking. Resources across the college are of a high quality. Recreational areas are calm and inviting.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality learning programmes that develop independence, communication and skills and help them to achieve their personal and/or work-related goals?**      **Significant progress**

Teachers make lessons fun and engaging. Students are therefore enthusiastic about their learning. Teachers ensure that each student knows what they need to do to achieve their challenging goals. Students develop communication, work-related and behaviour management skills very effectively. For example, they learn to interact respectfully with each other and staff, and develop conversational skills. Although attendance is low in a few areas, managers know why students are not attending. They put strategies in place to support students back into learning.

Teachers plan the order of the curriculum effectively. For example, in science, teachers identified gaps in students' knowledge of physics. Consequently, they started the science course by filling in these gaps before building on students' new knowledge and understanding. Teachers reflect routinely on 'What makes the learning unforgettable?' to improve their teaching practices further. Students can explain clearly what new knowledge and skills they have gained since starting at the college, for example independently travelling by taxi, standard deviation and the purpose of the enzyme trypsin.

Students' work is of a high quality. It is well presented and demonstrates what they know now and have learned over time. As their courses progress, students use more complex technical language. Students can retain this vocabulary when questioned by the teacher. For example, in level 1 animal care, students use the terms kleptoparasitism, endothermic and ectothermic accurately. They benefit from the use of mnemonics such as MR FAB for types of vertebrates (mammals, reptiles, fish, amphibians and birds). Students receive helpful feedback from teachers that explains clearly what they need to do to improve.

Students have a clear understanding of what they want to do when they finish college. They feel supported to explore options right from when they enrol. Work experience opportunities are varied and meet students' needs, ambitions and interests. For example, students apply for employment in the armed forces, games design, beauty therapy, animal care, healthcare and as farriers or RNLI volunteers.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?      Significant progress**

Safeguarding arrangements are highly effective. Every disclosure, incident and restraint is recorded in detail. Staff link these to wider support arrangements such as the updating of risk assessments, positive behaviour support plans and a review of the student's timetable.

Due to the college's location, staff complete detailed risk assessments for each student when they start at the college. Students benefit significantly from their supervised freedom to access the college grounds.

Leaders follow effective safer recruitment practices. They conduct comprehensive checks on all staff before they start work at the college.

Students are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe and the 'Prevent' duty. They know who to contact if they have any concerns. For example, students said that 'Prevent' is the strategy run by the government that is helping in the fight against radicalisation. They were clear that it is not just about terrorism. It can relate to animal rights and far right movements.

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