

Inspection of LifeBridge ASEND

Inspection dates:

21–23 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Provision for learners with high needs

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Information about this provider

LifeBridge ASEND is an independent specialist college based in the centre of Bolton in Greater Manchester. The college was established in 2015 and achieved independent status in September 2016. The college provides programmes for learners aged between 19 to 25 years who have moderate to severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are two pathway programmes from entry to level 2, pathway to independence and pathway to employment. Programmes focus on preparing young people towards independence and/or voluntary or paid employment. At the time of inspection, there were 35 learners, all with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) and for whom the college receives high-needs funding. There were 21 learners following the pathway to employment programme and 14 following the pathway to independence programme.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners enjoy attending LifeBridge college. It provides them with a friendly and lively environment. They especially like their lessons and all that they learn. Staff are caring and supportive and provide learners with a well-designed transition programme into college. This helps learners overcome any anxieties they have so they quickly settle into college life.

In addition to gaining qualifications, learners participate in a varied and wide range of activities outside the classroom. They frequently take part in trips to the cinema, restaurants and sporting activities such as swimming. Learners actively engage in community activities such as charity fundraising and regeneration projects such as grounds maintenance. From these activities, learners gain valuable skills in becoming more independent and active citizens in their communities.

Learners are provided with a highly effective careers programme. They visit careers fairs and the local job centres and have guest speakers, including employers. They receive external advice which inspires them to make informed choices about their next steps.

Learners feel safe. They are helped to keep themselves safe through a programme of activities designed to develop their resilience. For example, they attend sessions on mindfulness, stress management and how to keep themselves mentally healthy. Staff provide them with strategies, such as breathing exercises, so they can manage their emotions when in stressful situations.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and managers have not yet fully rectified all the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The quality of education that learners receive is not yet high enough.

Leaders have put in place an ambitious and purposeful curriculum for learners which prepares them well for their next steps. The pathway to independence helps learners develop knowledge and skills that supports them towards achieving independence and prepares them for adulthood. The pathway to employment programme enables learners to gain appropriate qualifications that are valued and recognised by employers. This supports them to progress to further vocational learning or employment. Learners' achievement of their vocational qualifications is high.

Tutors do not use the outcomes of learners' starting points or EHCPs to plan a sufficiently individualised programme. For example, tutors do not plan or link learning that takes place in the classroom with learning opportunities in learners' work placements. Learners' personal development goals are not routinely identified. Tutors do not use the wide range of activities that learners participate in to set challenging goals to help learners develop their skills further.

Tutors use activities in the classroom that help learners remember what has been previously learned. For example, in employability sessions, learners are encouraged to refer to visual prompts of key words displayed in the classroom when writing a CV. This helps them recall and remember the key components.

Tutors provide learners with detailed developmental feedback on their work. This helps learners know what they need to do to improve their work and what they have done well. Consequently, learners improve their confidence over time.

Staff do not use the information available to them to provide tailored support for all learners, so that learners can achieve the best possible outcomes. Leaders and managers have not put in place specific learning disability training so that staff can provide all learners with the support they need.

Tutors link learners' English and mathematical goals with their vocational sessions to help them develop these skills more quickly. They carefully monitor the progress learners make in improving their knowledge and skills. Tutors put in place additional support to help learners make faster progress if needed. However, learners do not develop their skills further because tutors do not set learners' goals to help them apply their English and mathematical skills in their work placements.

Job coaches use their links with local employers very effectively to find learners high-quality work placements that often lead to voluntary and paid employment opportunities when they leave college. Learners enjoy placements that are well matched to their abilities and interests. They develop useful skills that prepare them well for work. For example, learners follow instructions carefully when working in a community café. They check customers' orders with kitchen staff to ensure that they serve the correct order.

The board of directors/trustees has been slow to implement actions to bring about the improvements needed to the quality of education that learners receive. Board members have recently reviewed the structure of the board and their roles and rightly acknowledge there is no external scrutiny. They have begun to receive more information to monitor the quality of provision and provide challenge to leaders and managers. However, it is too soon to measure the effectiveness of these new arrangements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding policies and procedures that are in place ensure that staff understand their roles and how to raise any safeguarding or welfare concerns. Leaders and managers ensure that staff receive appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training to help keep learners safe. Staff carry out thorough risk assessments to ensure that learners are protected when taking part in activities in the community and when on work placements. Leaders and managers follow safe

recruitment practices, including the completion and recording of disclosure and barring checks, to ensure that staff are suitable to work with vulnerable adults.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Provide learners with a programme to meet their different levels of need. Use the outcomes from learners' EHCPs to plan challenging learning goals across the range of activities that learners take part in, so they can achieve their long-term goals and ambitions.
- Provide staff with specific disability training to ensure that learners are provided with the support strategies they need to help them make the best possible progress.
- Strengthen the board of directors/trustees so it can provide support and effectively challenge leaders to improve the quality of education for learners.

Provider details

Unique reference number	142922
Address	Armadale Road Bolton Greater Manchester BL3 4TP
Contact number	0120 4333 600
Website	www.lifebridge.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Gary Johnson
Provider type	Independent specialist college
Date of previous inspection	5–7 June 2018
Main subcontractors	n/a

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of post-19 education, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Elaine Price, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jane Young

Ofsted Inspector

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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 <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2020