

Catcote Futures

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider:	Independent specialist college
Address:	Warren Road Oakesway Hartlepool TS24 0RG

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From autumn 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to independent specialist colleges newly Education and Skills Funding Agency-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.

Catcote Futures is part of the Hartlepool Aspire Trust and began receiving funding in September 2018 for learners with high needs between the ages of 19 and 25. At the time of the inspection, there were 25 learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorder. Learners follow one of five pathways to prepare them for adulthood. The largest programmes are 'STEPS', which prepares learners for employment, and 'taking the lead', which prepares learners to live independently and to develop work-related skills.

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? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have high aspirations for their learners and what they can achieve in their adult lives. The focus of the curriculum is firmly on the knowledge and skills that learners need for work and to live happy and healthy independent lives.

Managers rightly place considerable emphasis on empowering learners to make their own choices. Learners choose which subjects they study, and staff plan the teaching to meet the needs of learners, according to their starting points and intended learning goals. Consequently, learners with a range of learning difficulties and disabilities work well together and develop important skills for life, such as team-work and decision-making.

Leaders and managers have secured a wide range of high-quality internal and external work placements, which enable learners to develop the skills that they need to meet their individual career aspirations. They have created excellent opportunities for learners to work in realistic working environments, away from the main college site, that support them to be well prepared for work. For example, Catcote Metro is a well-stocked and busy retail outlet in the main shopping district, and experience of working here successfully equips learners to work in retail.

Staff are well qualified and experienced in working with learners who have high needs. Managers ensure that staff have the training that they need to support learners well. A few teachers have been trained to support learners to self-regulate their behaviour successfully. Teaching assistants have recently received important training in feeding learners who have dysphagia.

Managers rightly recognise that learners need access to high-quality careers advice to help them fully develop and achieve their long-term goals. They have begun to use the expertise from within the trust to provide this advice, but it is too soon to identify the full impact of the actions that they are taking.

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? Reasonable progress

Teachers use learners' education, health and care plans well to determine the knowledge and skills that students need to acquire and to measure their starting points accurately. They use this information to support learners to make good progress. Where appropriate, learners develop skills and confidence in travelling independently, making their beds, and washing and drying their clothes.

Teachers provide useful opportunities for learners to develop and practise their knowledge and skills in English and mathematics. For example, learners handle money and work out change accurately while on work placement in a cafe. When playing boccia, learners accurately estimate and measure the distance of the team balls from the jack ball.

Teaching assistants and teachers use assessment activities effectively to check that learners are developing the knowledge that they need. They make particularly good use of observation and questioning to do this. In enterprise lessons, teachers use questions that enable learners to evaluate fully the enterprise skills that they have practised in the lesson. Learners can explain that they have cooperated successfully in a team and provide the evidence to support this.

Staff use a range of interesting activities to develop learners' understanding of social and emotional issues and to enable them to manage their behaviour. For example, learners participate enthusiastically in 'laughing yoga', which promotes their mental well-being.

Teachers cover topics in a well thought out and logical order. On the STEPS programme, teachers cover personal care and hygiene first before progressing onto personal presentation. They then ensure that learners practise interview techniques to prepare them for work experience.

Most staff ensure that students complete tasks as independently as possible. However, in a few cases teachers do not challenge students sufficiently. They can be too quick to complete the task for learners, rather than allowing learners to demonstrate the full extent of their capability.

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

Managers complete appropriate pre-employment checks for staff and undertake background checks of regular visitors to the site. They have a clear system of identifying which visitors can be unaccompanied in the college. Managers practise safe staff recruitment.

All staff benefit from a range of useful safeguarding training that managers update each year, including on topics such as the personal dignity of learners and staff responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty.

Managers record safeguarding incidents and concerns thoroughly and make referrals to external agencies as appropriate. Staff work well with external agencies to support learners to be safe in all aspects of their lives.

Learners have an appropriate understanding of safeguarding. They know how to keep themselves safe and who to contact if they have a concern.

Learners on the STEPS programme do not have sufficient understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Teachers had not covered this topic with students at the time of the inspection.

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