

Lifebridge ASEND

Progress monitoring report

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Type of provider:	Independent specialist college
Address:	Armandale Road Bolton Greater Manchester BL3 4TP

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Lifebridge ASEND was last inspected in January 2021. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

This monitoring visit focused on the extent to which leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances. It was undertaken as outlined in the [operational note on visits carried out from January 2021](#) and with reference to the further education and skills handbook.

These visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners in this period, including those with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, inspectors carried out this monitoring activity remotely. As a result, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would be the case during an on-site inspection. Therefore, this report provides a more limited level of assurance.

The impact of COVID-19 has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgement below. Inspectors did not evaluate leaders' response to COVID-19 during the spring and summer of 2020, when the provider was not open to all learners and there were no national expectations regarding remote education.

Theme

What progress are leaders and those responsible for governance making to ensure that staff teach a curriculum and provide support to meet learners' needs, including the provision of remote/online learning?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers continue to improve the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, the pace of improvement has slowed.

Following the previous inspection, the trustees appointed a new senior leadership team. The new team has carefully and thoroughly reviewed the curriculum and the quality of education. From September 2020, leaders implemented a new curriculum across both the independence and employability pathways. Where previous leaders prioritised enrichment activities, the new leadership team recognises the importance

of the development of learners' skills in English, mathematics, employability and independent living. The new curriculum reflects these priorities.

The order in which tutors teach the different topics enables learners to build new knowledge and skills over time. Tutors devise innovative activities for learners to develop their knowledge and skills. For example, learners who have achieved the gold standard on the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme further develop their communication skills by mentoring learners on the bronze and silver awards. However, tutors still do not consistently use the outcomes from learners' Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans or assessments of learners' starting points to plan challenging learning goals for all learners so that they can achieve, and exceed, their long-term goals.

At the previous inspection, it was recommended that staff be provided with specific disability training to support learners in developing strategies for learning. Staff have benefited from training activities, such as visual impairment awareness. Further specific disability training is planned. However, the current lockdown means that this is currently on hold until the college fully reopens.

The quality of leaders' reporting to the board of governors has improved since the previous inspection. As a result of better information, governors now understand the strengths and weaknesses of the college better. They are now able to challenge leaders and hold them to account for improvements to the quality of education. A new external governor has been appointed to the board recently.

Tutors and employers work jointly to support learners on work placement. Targets from EHC plans are discussed, and reviewed frequently with employers. As a result, learners achieve and, often exceed their targets. For example, catering learners who need to increase their confidence, help at the college's breakfast club before serving refreshments at public events. As a result, several learners have gained paid employment.

Leaders and managers have recently changed the online learning platform in response to feedback from learners and parents/carers. Learners enjoy and learn from the online activities they complete. They value the feedback they receive from tutors that helps them to improve their work. Parents/carers speak very positively about the quality of the online learning their young person receives.

Tutors provide appropriate additional support for learners struggling with their work. For example, a few learners who are working remotely found the mathematical concept of number line addition difficult. They were able to participate in live online sessions, with their tutors, to practise and develop these skills. As a result, learners were able to learn more-complex mathematical concepts.

Leaders and managers have recently implemented a new progress monitoring and recording tool. Tutors do not yet consistently identify and record what all learners have achieved and what they need to do next.

All learners benefit from weekly individual tutorial sessions with their tutors. These take place face-to-face for on-site learners and through video or telephone calls for learners working remotely. Learners discuss welfare and academic issues during these sessions. For example, learners working remotely discuss topics such as their feelings about the pandemic, social isolation, their motivation for learning and the work they have completed. In response to feedback from parents/carers and learners about the difficulties they face, leaders and managers commissioned weekly counselling sessions for worried learners and their families. Learners and their families told inspectors that they value the support provided by the college.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- ensure tutors use assessments of learners' starting points and the outcomes from learners' EHC plans more consistently to plan challenging learning goals so that learners can achieve their long-term goals and ambitions
- ensure that tutors consistently identify and record what learners have achieved and what they need to do next, so that there is an accurate record of learners' progress.

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