

# Routes4Life Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 146046

**Name of lead inspector:** Jon Bowman, Her Majesty's Inspector

**Inspection dates:** 21–22 April 2021

**Type of provider:** Independent specialist college

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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.

Routes4Life provide training to young people aged 19 to 25 years with severe to moderate special educational needs and/or disabilities, including complex physical, health and medical conditions. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were six students, all of whom have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Students are from the London Borough of Havering. They follow one-year programmes on employability, community participation or supported living to build their skills, knowledge and behaviours so that they can live more independently.

Routes4Life began teaching programmes to young adults in 2018 through a service level agreement with Corbets Tey School. Of the four directors of Routes4Life, two are governors at the school and two are employees of the school.

Routes4Life has capacity for 10 students. As a result of the pandemic, leaders have limited student numbers to six to ensure they can maintain a safe learning environment. For periods of time over the past year, students have not been able to access community facilities and work experience placements as part of their training.

The impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgements below.

### 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?**      **Insufficient progress**

Leaders and managers have developed the provision in response to local needs in partnership with the local authority. They have a clear rationale for creating programmes that allow students from Corbets Tey School, and others from the local area, to learn the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to achieve their personal goals. However, leaders' lack of experience in the education of learners with complex needs beyond school age has hampered their ability to implement their vision successfully.

Leaders and managers do not plan a curriculum that is based on an assessment of what students know and can do. As a result, students do not follow a logically sequenced curriculum based on their needs that helps build their skills, knowledge and behaviours over time. Once students returned to college in April this year, leaders did not act quickly enough to ensure that students were taught the full curriculum. Plans to reintroduce community-based activities into the curriculum are not yet in place. This inhibits the progress that students make.

Leaders and managers have been slow to take action to improve the quality of education that students receive. Leaders took positive steps in February 2020 to evaluate the provision by commissioning a review completed by a manager from the school. However, leaders and managers have not acted quickly enough on the well-considered recommendations that were made at that time.

Directors do not provide sufficient challenge to the leadership team on the quality of education that students receive. The board lacks expertise in the post-19 special educational needs sector. Leaders and managers recognise the need to increase the capacity of the board so that it provides effective challenge and support to develop the provision further.

**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?** **Insufficient progress**

Leaders and managers do not ensure that staff teach topics over time that are linked closely to the outcomes and targets for students set out in their EHC plans. They have only recently begun to align these. As a result, leaders and managers do not have a secure oversight of the progress that students make in achieving their personal goals.

Leaders and managers have developed a few opportunities that enable students on the employability pathway to develop the skills they need for employment. Through operating an online shop using donated goods, students develop their skills in working online. They learn how to share screens, send and receive emails and list items in an inventory. Students are proud of their achievements and take delight in sharing these.

Teaching assistants support students well. They know the students very well. They use gestures, sign language, symbols, objects of reference and electronic communication devices to good effect. As a result, students can communicate their thoughts, choices and ideas as independently as possible.

Leaders and managers responded well to the challenges of supporting students and their families during the pandemic. This ensured that students remained engaged in learning online or through work packs to complete at home. Students enjoy attending Routes4Life and say that staff 'make you happy when you are sad!'. Students say they enjoyed the online cooking lesson where, with the support of their parents, they made jacket potatoes with cheese. Parents value the support they have personally received from staff throughout the academic year. They rightly say that 'staff go the extra mile' to support them.

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

Leaders, managers and staff provide high levels of care for students. The college is a safe place for students to learn. Students know who to turn to should they feel unsafe or have any concerns.

Students on the employability pathway understand key concepts such as to how to stay safe online by not revealing personal information, including name, address or bank account details. However, teaching students of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism is not well embedded in the curriculum.

Leaders have appropriate policies in place to support and safeguard students. The policies give clear guidance for staff to follow. For example, the intimate care policy gives clear guidance to staff on how to successfully carry out intimate care with students. Leaders apply safe recruitment and selection procedures that ensure that staff are suitable to work with vulnerable young adults.

Directors do not scrutinise safeguarding arrangements well enough because safeguarding incidents are not routinely reported at board level. As a result, they do not have up-to-date information on any safeguarding incidents that occur and how well they have been managed.

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