

Future Finders Employability College

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider:	Independent specialist college
Address:	77 Union Street Oldham Greater Manchester OL1 1JZ

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.

Future Finders Employability College is an independent specialist college that provides education and support for students who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Students have learning difficulties and difficulties such as cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorder and, social, emotional and mental health needs. At the time of the visit, 11 students attended the college. Students study on a personalised employability pathway. They undertake work placements for three days per week and attend college for one day per week.

The COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic has meant that students were unable to attend work experience placements during local and national lockdown periods. A few students have received additional funding to remain at the college for a further year to complete their courses.

The impact of COVID-19 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? Reasonable progress

Leaders have a clear strategy and rationale for education programmes. The ambitious curriculum is limited to a one-year course that is focused on students gaining employment, volunteering roles and, for a few students, moving on to apprenticeship programmes. Leaders have been largely successful in achieving this aim. A few students who were unable to complete their supported internships during COVID-19 restrictions have returned to the college for a second year.

The curriculum is personalised to meet students' learning and development needs and is linked to education, health and care plan targets and students' aspirations. Teaching focuses on the development of employability skills, English and mathematics skills and independence skills. For example, students build on their

independent travel skills so that they can make their way to their work placements without support from the provider's staff.

Leaders have put in place effective systems and processes to evaluate and monitor the quality of the provision. This supports them to continually improve the quality of education. The quality improvement arrangements focus on the key actions for improvement, which are monitored frequently.

Staff are well-qualified and have extensive experience in working with students who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Staff benefit from specific training such as in autism spectrum disorder and de-escalation techniques to help them support students in college and in the workplace.

Parents report that students are happy at the college. They state that leaders and managers have managed the COVID-19 restrictions effectively by providing remote and online learning so that students could continue with their learning. They appreciate that students were able to complete internal work placements, for example with the facilities team when they were unable to go to external work placements.

The board of directors provide effective governance. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the college. The board challenges leaders rigorously and hold them to account for their actions.

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

Leaders and managers break down the broad targets outlined in students' education, health and care plans into more manageable and appropriate targets. Students make progress against their targets over time, such as talking confidently to others without interrupting them. Leaders rightly recognise that staff need to ensure that all students' individual targets are sufficiently challenging, to ensure that students achieve their full potential.

Students enjoy their work placements. They explain clearly how the work they are doing links to their career aspirations, for example organising a stock room in a charity shop and how this relates to jobs in warehousing. Students develop their communication skills by speaking politely, articulately and with confidence to people they do not know.

Students gain new skills in their placements, which they improve through frequent practise. For example, students improve the appearance of the local football club by

painting the fences. They make sure that at a health club, meals are served, and tables are cleared and cleaned. Employers are very positive about the contribution that students make to their businesses.

Students complete activities that are interesting, relevant and age appropriate. They complete their work neatly and make direct links to their work placements, such as including photographs of themselves correctly identifying hazards for their health and safety qualification.

The progress that students make on their course has slowed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. A few students found it difficult to participate in remote and online learning activities during their time away from college. Leaders and managers have assessed the learning that students missed during this time and have verbally agreed actions with students and their parents to help them to catch up. However, they have not formally recorded these actions so that students, parents and staff understand what students need to do to catch up.

Leaders place a high priority on careers, information, advice and guidance. Students receive independent, impartial careers information and advice as part of their annual review. They are supported effectively to complete a professional CV, job applications and in preparing for interviews. Students have secured employment including as a porter at the local hospital, in volunteering roles such as in a library and in digital technology and teaching assistant apprenticeships.

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

Staff, including the three designated safeguarding leads, receive relevant safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training and updates. They benefit from training to support students such as those with mental health concerns or aggressive and violent behaviours.

Leaders ensure that all students complete and understand e-safety training before they are given college tablet computers to use in the workplace, at home and in college. Students can explain the dangers of using technology, such as people using fake accounts to groom or radicalise them or to encourage them to participate in sexting.

Students feel safe and know who they need to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Students can identify the dangers in the environment around them and in the workplace. For example, they complete basic food hygiene qualifications and know how some uncooked foods can make people seriously ill. Students complete travel training and enjoy practising these skills, such as crossing the road safely and using public transport.

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