

Valley College

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	147464
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Inspection dates:	12 and 13 October 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 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.

Valley College is an independent specialist college that is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Sea View Trust. The college provides education and support for young people aged 18 to 25 years with severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and/or autism spectrum disorder.

At the time of the monitoring visit, 21 students attended the college, 18 of whom were in scope for this visit. Three students have received additional funding to remain at college for a further year to complete their courses. All students follow individualised programmes that focus on preparation for adulthood, citizenship and employability. Eight students were on the employability pathway, seven students were on the independence pathway and three students on the employment pathway.

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 designed a curriculum that has a clear focus. Students follow three pathways that help them to successfully develop their independence and the skills they need for work and employment. Leaders take full account of students' needs to plan individualised programmes that support students to achieve their long-term goals.

Leaders use quality processes effectively to monitor and improve the quality of education that students receive. For example, following lesson observations, leaders provided training for tutors to ensure that they work more effectively with support workers to help students make sustained progress.

Leaders provide new tutors with effective training to support them to be successful in their roles. For example, the induction now includes topics such as writing

effective targets that feed into the annual education, health and care (EHC) plan review process. Targets now accurately reflect the needs of students that help them to achieve their long-term goals and aspirations.

Leaders provide a comprehensive training plan for staff. Staff attend development sessions such as how to deliver high-quality teaching and learning for students with autism and speech and language difficulties. However, as most staff are new in post the impact of this training is yet to be seen.

Senior leaders do not have a thorough enough oversight of students' progress throughout the year. For example, short-term targets set are not routinely reviewed by senior leaders until the formal EHC plan review. As a result, progress for a minority of students is slow.

The directors provide effective governance. They hold senior leaders fully to account for their actions. Directors ensure that the curriculum for students returning to college for their fourth year helps them to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for future employment or independent living.

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

Staff effectively support students to learn the skills they need for adult life. They develop the curriculum to provide students with the skills and behaviours that they need for their next steps. For example, students become more independent in their communication and choice making by developing teamworking skills. As a result, they have the skills to take up employment opportunities either independently or with support.

Students with more complex needs successfully develop their fine motor skills. For example, students working on a project for a local company put together flooring samples on a hanger then into a plastic wallet. A few students complete this work independently.

Students benefit from effective support from staff. Support workers use strategies skilfully to manage students' anxiety. For example, support workers help students to self-manage their anxiety by not intervening straight away. This allows students time to process the information they need. As a result, students increase in confidence and become more independent with their work.

Students gain new skills in their internal work placements, which they improve through practice. For example, they work in the college kitchen making cakes before

they progress to preparing customers' lunch orders. Students develop their communication skills successfully by taking customer orders in the 'garage café'. Consequently, students speak confidently to people they do not know.

Students apply the skills they learn in college successfully at home, such as washing plates and cups and using the washing machine. They take part in projects, for example the students' parliament which develops their confidence. As a result, students make plans to become active citizens in the local community and undertake voluntary work.

Students do not always receive effective careers advice and guidance. They are aware of career options but do not know how to access specific job roles at the end of their programme. For example, students who show an interest in hairdressing, do not know how to gain work in a salon.

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

Staff and the four designated safeguarding leads receive appropriate training to keep up to date with safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. They attend training in online safety which they use to support students, for example when they discuss using social media.

Leaders have appropriate arrangements in place for reporting and following up safeguarding concerns. They work with multi-agency teams, such as adult social care and the local authorities, to ensure students receive the support they need.

Leaders provide useful health and well-being support for students. For example, following national restrictions, students received individual support to help with the transition back to college and into work placements. As a result, students become less anxious and are successful in college and at work.

Students feel safe and know who to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. They know how to keep safe at college and in the community. For example, students use knives and kitchen appliances safely when working in the kitchens. They know how to keep themselves safe when crossing roads.

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