

Grow 19 Ltd

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector:	Judy Lye-Forster, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent specialist college
Address:	The East Malling Centre Chapman Way East Malling Kent ME19 6SD

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.

Grow 19 Ltd is a small specialist post-16 institution (SPI) which opened in 2019 with ten learners. The college is based at The East Malling Centre, a local community centre that has a café, professional training kitchen, woodland trail, allotments, courtyard, hall, kitchen and classrooms. All learners are aged 19 to 25 with learning disabilities and/or autism and are in receipt of an education, health and care plan (EHCP). Learners follow one of three pathways that include vocational training, a weekly work experience placement and learning support programmes. All learners study English and mathematics, some up to level 2. At this visit, there were 24 learners on pathways in construction, horticulture or hospitality and catering, studying at entry level to level 1.

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?

Significant progress

Leaders have an extremely cohesive rationale for the provision which directly links to the needs of the learners, the local community and local employers. The curriculum is designed with learners at the centre and meets their academic, vocational and developmental needs well.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is ambitious for learners and enables them to be aspirational in their future lives, maximising their potential. The programmes challenge both the learners' perceptions of what they can do and those of others around them, including their parents or carers.

Leaders have made effective use of the job market within their local community to develop an appropriate curriculum. They link closely with employers and organisations to ensure that their learners are developing the skills and behaviours that the community and employers need. For example, a local employer has provided opportunities for learners to undertake work placements with their maintenance and

street cleaning teams. Learners attend work in the same shift patterns as the full-time work force so that they learn the demands of the job in a realistic work environment.

Leaders and teachers have comprehensive processes in place to monitor and track the progress that learners make over time. Staff regularly provide feedback to learners and recognise and celebrate the progress they are making.

Learners benefit from impartial careers advice and guidance from external guidance workers, who meet with learners and offer one-to-one tailored support. Learners also receive formal coaching and mentoring both at college and in the workplace and can access independent advocates.

Leaders and Board members have established appropriate and sufficient arrangements to assure themselves of the quality of the provision, including work experience placements. They know their provision well and act promptly where they identify weaknesses.

Leaders make effective use of the information they gather about where learners go following college. As a result, they have adjusted their curriculum to better prepare learners for their transition into work or volunteering.

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?

Significant progress

Staff have a thorough understanding of learners' needs. They use this information with considerable care to plan learning that meets the needs and interests of learners.

Teachers sequence lessons in a logical order, so that learners build their knowledge and understanding appropriately. In construction, learners learn about plum lining and area, before moving on to learning application of adhesive, tiling and, eventually, grouting. As a result, they produce good-quality and durable tiled walls. Teachers use repetition and reference to prior learning to support learners to recall new knowledge and remember what they are doing and why. For example, in horticulture when looking at a fresh piece of ground, the teacher reminds the learners about a planting activity they did recently and helps them come to the correct conclusion when deciding what they need to do next.

Teachers work assiduously to ensure that teaching activities are focused on practical, real-life tasks. As a result, learners become increasingly independent and responsible. They securely develop the skills they will need for life beyond college. In English and mathematics, teachers use the specific interests of learners to design

teaching activities effectively. For example, they teach learners about decimal points using formula 1 race lap times.

Learners successfully develop their skills through work placements which prepare them for employment after college. Staff work closely with employers to ensure that learners develop the additional skills they may need for their role. For example, staff in hospitality help learners know about the different personal protective equipment required for safe work in kitchens. They check that learners understand safe working practices such as the use of different chopping boards for food preparation. As a result, learners understand how to keep themselves safe when preparing food at home, as well as becoming more adept in their job roles.

Staff help learners to become increasingly responsible in their work and considerate of their colleagues. Learners are rightly proud of their work and the college.

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

Significant progress

Learners feel safe at Grow 19 Ltd and know how to seek support if they need it, both in and out of college. Staff support learners, for whom it is appropriate, to report concerns independently to external agencies so that they become increasingly self-sufficient, in preparation for leaving college.

The designated safeguarding leads keep detailed and thorough records of safeguarding, welfare and behaviour concerns. They take prompt and efficient action and follow up referrals to external agencies to ensure they reach a satisfactory conclusion.

Leaders have a good awareness of local threats and risks. They invite external specialists into the college to deliver focused sessions. Specialists support learners to be able to identify gang and drug-related behaviour and learn what to do if they are approached. Learners also benefit from tutorials on safe socialising. Leaders run projects in collaboration with the community magistrate on specific safeguarding topics, such as making choices.

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