

Inspection of Community College Initiative Ltd

Inspection dates:

1–3 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Provision for students with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

In 2017, Community College Initiative Ltd (CCI) registered as an independent specialist college. It provides education for young people in Essex, with complex social, emotional, health and learning needs. Many students have been absent from learning for long periods of time. Students study individual learning programmes in community and work-based settings. These include the home, workplace, leisure facilities, charities and further education providers. Students work towards English, mathematics and employability targets to support work-based destination and living skills.

The college offers flexible programme start dates throughout the year. At the time of inspection, 39 students were on individual learning programmes. Approximately 18 students are aged 16-19 and 21 students are adults. These programmes ranged from pre-entry level to level 2, with most at entry level. All students are in receipt of high-needs funding and have an education, health and care plan.

What is it like to be a student with this provider?

Students look forward to coming to college and have a positive attitude to learning. They attend regularly and are punctual. They enjoy lessons that relate to their interests and the skills they need to succeed. Students gain confidence from exploring activities they love. For example, they delight at completing a cooking activity and eating what they produce. They like the opportunities to join a gym, go swimming or ice skating as it helps them stay fit and calm.

The culture at college is calm, polite and respectful. Students are extremely well supported by tutors and learning support assistants (LSAs). Staff know their students very well. They work flexibly, including carrying out home visits, to encourage students to attend. Students feel listened to by their LSA, even when they are struggling to engage in their learning. They say that having a member of support staff allocated specifically to them gives them someone to talk to about their worries.

Students show positive attitudes when on work placements. They enjoy talking about the work they do and showing visitors around. They are proud of their work and feel a sense of community spirit. Students often take on extra responsibilities, such as feeding the farm animals during holiday periods.

Students feel safe at college and know how to keep themselves safe. They work on a programme of personal development with their tutor. They learn about health and safety in the workplace and how to stay safe online.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and managers have a clear expectation of what the curriculum prepares students for. Leaders and managers work creatively to break down the barriers that may have prevented students from accessing education successfully in the past. Leaders have created a highly individualised, flexible and bespoke curriculum. They closely match activities to students' interests and long-term goals. Leaders use specialist tutors very effectively to capture students' imagination and spark their interest. For example, a disc jockey works with students to support creative music activities. Students improve their technical understanding of the equipment used to produce different genres of music. As a result, students are well prepared for employment, greater independence and social interaction.

Managers have developed a well-planned curriculum. Tutors gather a range of information over time to understand students' existing knowledge and skills. Tutors plan personalised learning activities that build on what students know and can do. Students develop a greater awareness of how to contribute to their community. They learn to do things for themselves and to develop skills for work, including their English and mathematical skills.

Tutors are well qualified, knowledgeable and experienced. They have a good understanding of their students' needs. Many have worked in the high-needs sector for some time. They undertake additional training specific to their students' individual needs to teach and support each student's development. Tutors are willing to develop their own expertise in a subject that interests a student they are working with.

Tutors promote and embed students' English and mathematical skills expertly. For example, when planning a trip, students complete an itinerary and a budget for the trip. They use the computer to research the train and bus timetable. They find the most cost-effective tickets and the fastest routes. They discuss strategies to use to overcome anxieties during the trip. As a result, students know and can apply what they have learned to every day practical situations.

Tutors offer clear and thorough explanations. They use a range of strategies to help students understand key concepts. These include the use of visual materials, skilful questioning and revisiting concepts several times. For example, tutors explain the purpose of Shrove Tuesday to students. They explain its relationship to Lent and Easter as a Christian festival. Consequently, students are clear about why they are cooking pancakes.

Tutors make good use of open questions to encourage students to consider and reflect on what they have learned. Tutors help students understand the subjects they are learning and how to apply what they have learned in practice. For example, they ask students to identify the next steps in a recipe or how to stop pancake batter sticking to the bottom of a pan. As a result, students remember what they have learned and the cooking skills needed. They eat the pancakes to assess their own competency.

Tutors use daily personalised targets to plan students' learning. However, the targets they set are not always specific enough to accurately state what the student needs to do and how to achieve it. Tutors provide detailed feedback to students that outline what they can do to improve their work. As a result, students produce work of a good standard.

Staff develop students' understanding of citizenship and British values appropriately. They have created a learning environment that recognises the highly individual nature of its students. Staff challenge students to respect the views of others, such as their religious background and cultural heritage. As a result, students gain an awareness of equality and diversity.

Staff promote students physical and mental well-being extremely well. They praise students' achievements and reinforce their positive activities. During cooking activities, students confidently identify healthy foods in their meals.

Not all students are able to explore and understand healthy personal relationships and local risks. Staff do not routinely deliver these key concepts to students with profound or more complex needs. They promote healthy relationships on a needs-

led basis only. Staff are quick to respond if they feel a young person is at risk or demonstrating inappropriate views or behaviours.

Leaders have planned an effective individualised approach to vocational advice and guidance for students. They work closely with the local authority 'Preparing for adulthood' team to help students and families plan their next steps. Leaders work effectively with community partners to provide meaningful experiences for students that develop their workplace skills. As a result, students progress to their chosen destinations, particularly employment or further learning.

Leaders recognise that they have not established rigorous arrangements for external oversight or validation of their provision. They are provided with challenge through their existing partnership arrangements with the local authority. Leaders have developed useful networks and they attend conferences to keep up to date with the sector developments. However, they are not currently held to account on their performance management and improvement planning. Leaders have plans in place to rectify this shortfall, however at the time of the inspection, this was not yet in place.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have implemented effective safeguarding arrangements to keep students safe. They have appropriate arrangements to keep staff and students safe when working in the community and home-based settings. They maintain detailed records of concern and use them effectively to support identification of trends or patterns for escalation.

Leaders work effectively with external agencies and partners to safeguard students and access support for those families and students in crisis. They have developed bespoke and specialist opportunities to support students' mental health and well-being. For example, they have staff trained to offer counselling support. They have sourced external counsellors who specialise in support for autistic students. During their community work at the Wilderness project, trained counsellors work and talk with students.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders need to implement governance arrangements to support and challenge them to make improvements, develop their strategic direction and to hold them to account.
- Leaders need to ensure that target setting is specific enough to accurately state what is expected of the student.
- Leaders need to ensure that students understand the broader aspects of safeguarding, such as healthy personal relationships and the local risks they may face in their daily lives.

Provider details

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Website	www.cci.education
Principal/CEO	John Carswell
Provider type	Independent specialist college
Date of previous inspection	5–7 June 2019
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Director of Teaching and Learning, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising students' work, seeking the views of students, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Penny Fawcus, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ben Walsh	Ofsted Inspector
Rosy Belton	Ofsted Inspector

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