

# Inspection of bemix

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 April 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Information about this provider

Formerly known as Skillnet Group, bemix began operating in 2001 and successfully registered as an independent specialist college in 2017. Based in Kent, bemix supports young people with autism spectrum disorder and/or learning difficulties to learn skills and gain qualifications needed for employment and life.

At the time of the inspection, 16 learners were studying preparation for employment courses, and 30 were on supported internship courses, which include enterprise sessions, functional skills and job club for those not yet in employment.

## What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners value the positive culture that leaders and staff have successfully created. For example, staff articulate with confidence the organisation's ethos of 'be seen, be heard and belong', which they consistently embody in their work.

Teachers and work coaches support learners well to have positive attitudes to their learning and work. They help learners to see the benefits of what they are doing and how they are developing. As a result, learners understand well the skills and knowledge that they are gaining and can apply these competently in the workplace.

Despite the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders have ensured that most young people have continued on their programmes, and positive employment outcomes have reduced only minimally. Leaders have put in place

supportive and effective arrangements to support learners further where they have not been able to gain paid employment.

Learners feel very safe in the classroom and at their workplaces. Most learners recall their safeguarding training, including the 'Prevent' duty and the signs of sexual harassment. They know the risks to their safety in their locality and know how to report any concerns.

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

Leaders have a clear vision and have skilfully designed a curriculum that is ambitious for all learners to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed for adulthood and successful paid employment. For example, staff carefully assess whether learners are ready for supported internships and have developed a pre-employment curriculum that supports those who are not ready. The curriculum has been maintained well throughout the pandemic.

Leaders work highly effectively with partners such as local authorities, schools, the Department for Work and Pensions and similar providers in the area. Together, they ensure that the right provision is available in the areas where learners need it the most. Leaders work closely with key stakeholders, such as employers, parents and carers, and the local authority, to plan a highly individualised curriculum that meets each learner's needs.

Most employers value the positive attitudes that learners consistently demonstrate in the workplace. For example, one learner creates a very positive working environment in the coffee shop where they work, talking politely and with humour to customers and other staff. Employers, learners and staff benefit from frequent opportunities to discuss learners' progress so that all parties understand the support and next steps that are needed to continue learners' development. For example, an employer had raised a concern about a learner's reading skills. Teachers put in place additional support using a reading scheme, which helped build the reading capacity of this learner.

Teachers check learners' prior knowledge and skills carefully at the start of their programmes through a range of effective activities. They use this information well to plan activities such as job clubs, enterprise sessions and contextualised English and mathematics sessions. As a result, learners rapidly gain new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, learners can skilfully use persuasive speech or writing for job applications. Leaders and managers reduce the support that learners receive to enable them to become more independent. For example, learners are supported by work coaches when they first start a role. As the learners develop friendships, competence and confidence in the workplace, the work coach significantly reduces their presence.

Teachers and work coaches use assessment well to identify progress and gaps in learning. Learners benefit from congratulatory feedback on their work. However,

they do not consistently receive useful feedback that identifies the incremental steps they need to take to develop the quality of their work further and achieve their targets.

Leaders have reviewed the membership and terms of reference of the governing board since the previous inspection visit. They now have internal and external governors with an appropriate range of experience. However, it is too early to see the impact of this on the quality of education.

Leaders have improved their knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and have set timely and appropriate actions for improvement in most areas. However, their knowledge of the implementation of the curriculum, and specifically, the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching of the curriculum, is underdeveloped.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) are appropriately trained and experienced and ensure that all staff receive regular training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

The DSLs have effective relationships with external agencies, including social services, the police, local 'Prevent' duty coordination boards and adult and children's safeguarding services in the local authorities where they work.

Learners are safe in learning and in the workplace. However, employers do not know enough about risks of radicalisation and extremism to learners' safety in the locality. Staff, learners and employers know how to report concerns. The DSLs take timely and appropriate action in all cases. They keep careful, secure records that enable them to track concerns over time, making referrals where necessary.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders and managers should improve their knowledge to ensure that they fully understand what teachers and work coaches are doing to enable learners to develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Leaders should ensure that all employers are sufficiently knowledgeable about the risks of radicalisation and extremism, so that they are able to help learners to stay safe.
- Leaders, managers and teachers should ensure that the feedback that learners receive on their work helps them to identify how they can further improve their work.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144788
<b>Address</b>	Armadillo Flexi Offices Canterbury Office 12 7 Marshwood Business Park Marshwood Close Canterbury CT1 1DX
<b>Contact number</b>	01227374285
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.bemix.org">www.bemix.org</a>
<b>Principal</b>	Helena Jennings (Head of Supported Employment)
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent specialist college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 to 21 March 2019
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of supported employment, 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 learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

## Inspection team

Emma Leavey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Daniel Beale

Her Majesty's Inspector

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