

# Inspection of InFocus College

Inspection dates:

26 to 28 April 2022

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

## Information about this provider

InFocus College (Infocus) was previously inspected in November 2018 when it was known as WESC Foundation College.

InFocus is a specialist college located in Exeter. It provides education and training to young people aged 16 to 25 years who have visual impairments and other special educational needs and/or disabilities, including complex medical, physical and health conditions.

The college is part of the InFocus Charity that provides services, including a school, a day centre and accommodation services.

At the time of this inspection, 35 students who have high needs were studying at the college, each with an education, health and care plan. Students study a curriculum that aims to build their skills and knowledge so they can lead more independent lives.

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

Students enjoy attending college and learning in a calm environment, and they feel well supported by staff. Staff know their students well, and they use this knowledge to provide students with effective support when they become overwhelmed or anxious, and to help them to return to learning quickly.

Students do not always benefit from studying a curriculum that prepares them well enough for adulthood. Although, leaders and managers have developed a curriculum that helps students to improve their English and mathematics skills, a few teachers use learning activities and resources that are not appropriate for young adults. As a result, students do not always develop the specific knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to progress successfully after college.

Students demonstrate high levels of respect towards each other. They have appropriate and trusting relationships with staff. Students have positive attitudes and most engage actively with their learning.

Students enjoy taking part in a well-planned college enrichment programme. They talk enthusiastically about using the onsite swimming pool. Most take part in weekly swimming and hydrotherapy sessions, which helps to promote their physical and mental well-being. However, because of the pandemic, not all students have sufficient opportunities to access additional activities within the community. This limits their opportunity to play an active role in society and extend their own confidence and knowledge beyond the college.

Most students participate in well-planned internal work placement opportunities, such as working in the college catering outlet and the administrative office of the Infocus charity. This helps them to develop the appropriate skills and knowledge to prepare them for employment. However, because of the pandemic, many students have not yet had the opportunity to participate in external work experience or develop further their skills in unfamiliar settings. Leaders have rightly recognised this and plan to reintroduce external work experience placements in the coming months.

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

Leaders and managers have revised the curriculum content since the previous inspection. Although there is now a greater focus on developing students' English and mathematics skills, the curriculum is not yet sufficiently ambitious for all students. For example, leaders and managers have not yet explored fully the views of employers or considered local or national priorities when planning the curriculum. The curriculum does not provide sufficient focus on developing the knowledge, skills and behaviours that each student needs to progress successfully into adulthood. Consequently, not all students are prepared well enough for their next steps.

Teachers do not always teach the curriculum in a way that is appropriate for adult students. For example, a few teachers teach literacy using traditional children's stories such as Little Red Riding Hood and Jack and the Beanstalk. Consequently, students cannot always make connections between the literacy skills that they are learning at college and their use in their everyday adult lives.

A few teachers do not enable students to develop or practice new knowledge, skills or behaviours by learning in a realistic learning environment. For example, a few teachers teach cooking skills in a classroom where students do not have access to the correct equipment, such as the tools they would use in a domestic or commercial kitchen.

Teachers and enablers (learning support assistants) do not always encourage students to be more independent and make decisions about their learning. A few students participate in activities that are overly led by staff, and they are not given choices on whether to participate or to choose from a range of alternative activities to help to deepen their knowledge.

A few students arrive late for lessons or miss lessons because they are attending essential therapy sessions. Staff do not always ensure that these students revisit the learning they have missed, and therefore gaps in their knowledge are not addressed.

Although most students receive appropriate, impartial careers advice and guidance provided by external career specialists, a few do not receive sufficient guidance to help them to understand fully their future options or what they need to do to be successful in achieving their goals when they leave college.

Students benefit from participating in a wide range of therapies at the college. These include occupational therapy, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, mobility, and work with health and Visual Impairment specialists. These therapies complement and help students to access the curriculum and develop further their skills for the future.

Therapists support teachers and enablers well to develop a greater understanding of how they can meet students' individual needs. Therapists meet staff regularly and provide beneficial training. As a result, staff confidently use communication tools such as signs, speech and symbols to enable learners to access the curriculum.

Most teachers and enablers use assistive technology effectively in order to help students to access the curriculum. For example, students receive specialist teaching in the use of their Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices. This increases their independence and improves their ability to communicate and become more involved in their learning.

Teachers and enablers participate in a range of professional development activities, such as training in personal care and autism spectrum disorder. This improves their knowledge of and capacity to support a wide range of students. However, a few staff do not implement the training well enough when supporting students.

Trustees are well informed about the operations and the areas for improvement at the college, such as the monitoring of student progress over time. They also receive regular updates from leaders and managers on safeguarding, student incidents and staffing. Trustees make positive contributions to the college and participate regularly in activities, such as visiting lessons.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders rightly prioritise the safeguarding of their students. They have developed appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures. Staff apply these effectively to help students to stay safe within the large, open college campus environment. The members of the safeguarding team meet regularly to discuss student concerns. They seek advice and make appropriate referrals to other agencies, such as local authorities.

Staff participate in regular safeguarding training. They know how and when to identify and report safeguarding incidents and concerns. As a result, staff referrals are timely and followed up quickly by the safeguarding team.

Leaders and managers use effective processes to ensure that they undertake the necessary checks on staff before they begin working with children and vulnerable adults.

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

- Implement effectively an ambitious and high-quality curriculum that enables students to swiftly develop new skills, knowledge and behaviours that prepare them well for adulthood.
- Plan therapy sessions and lessons carefully and implement clear strategies to ensure students arrive on time to learning sessions, are ready to learn and do not miss essential curriculum content.
- Rapidly expand the opportunities for students to participate in enrichment, volunteering and work experience in the community and ensure that all students receive high-quality careers advice and guidance.
- Ensure that all staff implement fully the learning from training activities when supporting students.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	132042
<b>Address</b>	Topsham Road Countess Wear Exeter Devon EX2 6HA
<b>Contact number</b>	01392 454 200
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.infocus-charity.org.uk">www.infocus-charity.org.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Martyn Cox
<b>Provider type</b>	Special college
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	14 to 16 November 2018
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, 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

Esther Williams, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lyn Bourne	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Rowley	Ofsted Inspector
Gillian Paterson	Ofsted Inspector

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022