

# Inspection of Expanse Learning (Expanse Group Ltd)

Inspection dates:

26 to 28 April 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Provision for learners with high needs

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

## **Information about this provider**

Expanse Group Limited (EGL) is an independent provider of education and health and social care. In 2015, EGL set up an independent specialist college, Expanse Learning, delivering programmes to students with a variety of special educational needs and/or disabilities. It provides specialist further education for young people aged between 16 and 25.

At the time of inspection, 77 students attended the college at two sites in Leigh and Orrell, near Wigan in Greater Manchester. Students follow individualised programmes on one of five pathways. Almost half of students study preparation for life and work, and one third are on supported internships or the employability pathway. The rest study creative industry and production, and communication and sensory pathways.

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

Students thrive in the friendly and supportive college environment. They strive to achieve the high expectations that leaders and staff set. Students are polite. They are on time for sessions, prepared and ready to learn. Students thoroughly enjoy their lessons and the time they spend with their friends at college.

Most students make good progress from their starting points. They talk proudly about the new knowledge and skills they have learned. Students told us how they were now confident to go to the shops by themselves or with friends. They have significantly improved their independent daily living skills.

The majority of students progress onto higher level pathways at the college, including the employability pathways and supported internships. Others move into independent living when they finish their education programmes. However, leaders do not ensure that students on the preparation for life and work pathway have enough opportunities to experience the practical elements of the world of work, such as attending work placements.

Students feel safe and know who to tell if they have any concerns. They actively take part in discussions about healthy relationships. Students clearly demonstrate their understanding of consent and contraception.

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

Leaders, managers and governors have high expectations of staff and students at the college. They have created an ambitious and challenging curriculum. Leaders and managers work collaboratively with families and other agencies to remove barriers to learning and support students to achieve their ambitions.

Leaders and managers plan and develop the curriculum to meet local needs. Recently, leaders introduced a sensory and communication pathway for students with severe and profound learning difficulties. However, leaders do not work closely with employers to plan and support students' education and training. They have recently appointed a manager with specific responsibilities for developing employer links. It is too soon to see the impact of this.

Teachers and teaching assistants are suitably qualified, knowledgeable and experienced. Teachers use a range of activities in lessons that maintain students' interest. Staff benefit from a comprehensive development programme, including training in teaching practices, safeguarding and specialist knowledge such as autism spectrum disorder.

Leaders and teachers plan and sequence the curriculum successfully. They assess students' starting points accurately. Staff use the information to set highly effective and relevant personalised targets. Students are heavily involved in co-creating and

evaluating their goals. Most students make rapid progress towards achieving their learning outcomes.

Most students build a broad range of skills and knowledge over time that equips them well for their future aspirations. They take part in lively discussions, developing their communication and social interaction skills. However, teachers do not plan learning for a few individuals well enough. In mixed-ability classes and classes with larger group sizes, a few students do not produce work of a consistently high standard or make rapid progress from their starting points.

Leaders and staff have created a calm and inclusive culture in which students are supportive of one another. Students feel confident to sound out words in front of their classmates. They model the positive behaviours they see in their peers and staff, such as respect and kindness. Students take pride in their roles as peer mentors and learner voice champions.

Teachers and teaching assistants check students' understanding of the skills and knowledge they have learned effectively. They recap and reinforce key concepts frequently. Students know and can do more as a result. They use the mathematical knowledge they gain to become confident in telling the time.

Staff provide constructive and regular feedback to students. They use journals to provide written feedback which students and teachers discuss. Students understand how well they are doing and what they need to focus on to improve. They value this approach and use it to keep up with their work and to ask for help when they need it.

Students enjoy careers talks from guest speakers such as radio producers, the army and actors. Staff support them to write curriculums vitae and job applications and practise interview techniques. Students who are transitioning out of the college and supported interns receive independent advice and guidance from external professionals. A few students, who are further away from the workplace, are not as well informed about the options for their next steps.

Governors provide appropriate challenge to leaders and managers. They have a clear strategy for the college, built around a curriculum that enables students to achieve their full potential.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders place a high priority on keeping students safe. They have created a positive safeguarding culture across the college. The designated safeguarding lead maintains well-developed links with external agencies such as social services and the police. They keep up to date with localised safeguarding issues which they cascade to staff.

Students are well informed about how to keep themselves safe. The safeguarding team incorporates relevant training into students' personal growth and well-being curriculum. Students learn about radicalisation and extremism, peer-on-peer abuse, and county lines.

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

- Engage with employers to plan and support students' education and training so that all students have enough opportunities to experience the practical elements of the world of work.
- Ensure that teachers plan learning effectively so that all students produce work of a consistently high standard and make rapid progress from their starting points.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141738
<b>Address</b>	Leigh Sports Stadium Sale Way Leigh Sports Village Leigh Greater Manchester WN7 4JY
<b>Contact number</b>	01942877715
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.expanselarning.co.uk">www.expanselarning.co.uk</a>
<b>CEO</b>	Tony Brown
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent specialist college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24 to 26 September 2018
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director post-16, 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

Alison Cameron Brandwood, lead inspector

Tracy Gillett

Lisa Duncalf

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
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