

# Inspection of Fir Tree Fishery CIC

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 June 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this provider

Fir Tree Fishery CIC (Fir Tree College) was established as an independent specialist college in September 2018. It provides education and training for young people aged 16 to 25 with learning difficulties/special educational needs. The college is in Shevington, near Wigan in Greater Manchester. It has its own accessible angling lake and polytunnel.

At the time of inspection, 26 students attended the college. Half of the students required support for social, emotional and/or mental health needs and around one third had autism spectrum disorder. Students follow programmes that consist of English and mathematics, vocational studies and the development of personal and social skills and skills for work.

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

Students have high expectations of themselves and strive to achieve their goals. They appreciate the helpful and supportive staff who 'treat them well'. Students benefit from the inclusive culture that leaders have developed. They are very kind, sensitive and supportive towards each other. Students are polite and well mannered. They enjoy coming to college, which they find fun and interesting.

Most students make good progress from their starting points. They are proactive and hard-working on their work placements. Students work together collaboratively when they clear embankments at a local conservation site. They understand the importance of keeping pathways clear to ensure they are accessible to wheelchair users. Students are proud of the work they do for their local communities.

Students are ambitious about their futures. They are confident that their college courses will help them fulfil their ambitions. Most students progress on to further study, work or volunteer after completing their learning programme. The majority gain and sustain employment.

Students understand how to keep themselves safe. They follow health and safety procedures correctly. Students drink plenty of water and wear sunscreen when working outside in hot weather. They describe the importance of wearing safety boots and high visibility vests while clearing the areas around gravestones in a local cemetery.

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

Governors, leaders, managers and staff are ambitious for their students. They have high expectations of what students can achieve. They have created a challenging and aspirational curriculum which meets students' needs. Students develop valuable skills such as resilience and teamwork.

Leaders and managers work with a range of partners to develop a purposeful curriculum in which students gain the skills they need to be successful in their next steps. Parents and/or carers are delighted with the quality of education their young person receives. They value the communication they have with leaders and managers.

Staff are suitably qualified and experienced in their roles. Staff benefit from a range of professional development, including specialist training in managing student behaviour. Managers identify weaknesses in teaching practices as part of their quality assurance processes. They put in place staff training. However, a few staff are not trained sufficiently to develop the literacy skills of students while on work placement.

Managers sequence the curriculum effectively so that students learn new topics in a logical order. For example, the mental health curriculum starts with an introduction

to positive and negative mental health. It moves onto a range of mental health conditions, followed by challenging perceptions. It ends with self-care and resilience. However, tutors and work coaches do not provide enough opportunities for students to recap and reinforce their learning across the curriculum so they make rapid progress.

Most students make good progress on their programme. Managers use a comprehensive initial and baseline assessment to identify students' skills and abilities at the start of their course. They use this information to develop individualised programmes for students. Managers track how well students are progressing on their programmes. They put in place appropriate support to help those who are falling behind to catch up.

Tutors and job coaches plan learning so that students develop a broad range of skills and knowledge over time. Students develop their confidence and independence. For example, they sourced donations and organised Christmas charity boxes for people in the local community. Students learn how to tell the time and measure cleaning products accurately as part of their caretaking placement. They become better equipped to deal with daily challenges.

Students behave in an exemplary manner. They show respect and empathy for others while working in the community. Staff and students identified that a few students do not always manage their behaviour as well in the classroom as they do on work placement. Leaders have put in place a range of strategies to help students to regulate their behaviour, for example taking the resident Alpacas for walks.

Students benefit from the feedback they receive from work coaches on their placements. They improve their use of specialist tools such as a half-moon edger when carrying out gardening activities. Although most tutors provide feedback to students on their written work, a few do not. This means that not all students benefit from feedback which helps them to improve and make rapid progress.

Students attend talks by guest speakers such as the signs to look out for in someone who is being drawn into extremist behaviour. They enjoy the opportunities to take part in enrichment activities, including a trip to Blackpool illuminations and visiting the theatre. Leaders have plans in place to put on additional activities, so students have more opportunities to try new experiences.

Leaders acknowledge that they have work to do to ensure that students receive high-quality careers advice and guidance throughout their programme. Only a few students receive independent careers guidance. Leaders identified that current work placements do not always match students' future career aspirations. They have recently appointed a manager to source a broader range of work placements.

Governors know the provider well. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the college and support leaders to make improvements. Leaders provide governors with suitable reports, including safeguarding, student progress and

curriculum developments. Governors provide appropriate challenge and scrutiny to leaders and managers.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have in place suitable procedures for reporting safeguarding concerns. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) responds promptly to concerns as they arise. The DSL makes referrals to other organisations when needed, such as the police and counselling services. The DSL monitors safeguarding cases appropriately. They communicate frequently with the student, their parent and/or carer and social services as necessary.

The DSL keeps up to date with local safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty concerns, for example antisocial behaviour and right-wing extremism. They organise external speakers, including police community support officers and the local complex safeguarding team to talk to students on topics such as criminal and sexual exploitation.

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

- Ensure tutors and work coaches plan learning so that students recap and reinforce their learning across the curriculum.
- Ensure staff are suitably trained to develop the literacy skills of students while on work placement.
- Provide high-quality independent careers guidance so that students understand the range of career opportunities available to them.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146039
<b>Address</b>	The Nook Appley Bridge Shevington Wigan Greater Manchester WN6 9JB
<b>Contact number</b>	01257251502
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.firtreecic.co.uk">www.firtreecic.co.uk</a>
<b>Directors</b>	Darren Fletcher and Martin Taylor
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent specialist college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the centre manager, 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

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