

Inspection of Royal Mencap Society

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Inadequate
Provision for learners with high needs	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Royal Mencap Society is a charity that works with people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Royal Mencap teaches traineeships, apprenticeships, supported internships and pre-supported internship programmes at a number of different centres throughout England. Royal Mencap has headquarters in Islington, London.

At the time of the inspection, Royal Mencap had 124 learners who have education, health and care plans (EHC plan) and high needs studying a supported internship programme. There were 35 adult learners with SEND studying a short traineeship programme funded through the adult education budget. There were six apprentices with SEND studying the standards-based level 2 customer service practitioner apprenticeship.

This academic year, Royal Mencap have introduced a one-year, pre-supported internship programme. The aim of the programme is to prepare young people for a supported internship. There are currently 40 learners on this programme, all of whom have an EHC plan and high needs.

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

Learners learn in calm, nurturing and inclusive environments. Tutors structure and pace lessons well. They do this by providing clear instructions for learners. At their work experience placements, learners on traineeships work industriously in warehouse and office settings and demonstrate professional standards of behaviour.

All apprentices are on customer services apprenticeships. For too many apprentices, the curriculum does not relate adequately to their aspirations and the jobs they have, for example as a kitchen porter or human resources administrator. As a result, it is not clear how apprentices will achieve and benefit from the qualification.

Learners and apprentices have positive attitudes toward their learning. They develop increased levels of confidence during their programmes of study. For example, learners who work in train stations are able to handle customers' queries confidently. Apprentices enjoy working with colleagues. The training helps them make new friends. Learners on supported internship and traineeship programmes particularly enjoy the practical work with employers.

During their programme, learners and apprentices receive appropriate levels of learning support. This support is reduced appropriately over time as learners and apprentices develop their confidence and skills. Consequently, the majority become more independent and can work and travel with less support.

Learners and apprentices do not receive impartial careers advice early enough during their programme to enable them to plan for their futures. Where it is in place, this is delivered towards the end of the training. Consequently, learners and apprentices do not receive effective support to progress into employment.

Most pre-internship learners have been offered a supported internship programme in the next academic year. However, too few learners on the supported internship and traineeship programmes achieve their primary goals of progression to work. Too few learners achieve their English and mathematics qualifications.

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

Senior leaders and managers have a clear rationale for the programmes they offer. They aim to support learners and apprentices with SEND to move into employment. However, they do not ensure that the training meets their aims well enough. Too many learners on supported internship and traineeship programmes do not succeed in gaining sustained employment. Senior leaders do not ensure that apprentices are in the right job roles that help them develop the skills they need to achieve their apprenticeship.

Senior leaders and governors have not rectified quickly enough some of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection in June 2019. For example, they do not ensure that learners and apprentices benefit from a consistently good quality of

education, and too few learners do not achieve their English and mathematics qualifications.

Senior leaders and governors do not provide effective scrutiny of the quality of education that learners and apprentices receive. Senior leaders and governors do not use information about the quality of provision well enough to identify key weaknesses and make the necessary improvements. Governors do not provide sufficient challenge to senior leaders to make improvements. As a result, learners, apprentices and staff at the different centres experience too much variability in the quality and effectiveness of the support they receive.

Tutors sequence the supported internship and traineeship programmes in a logical order. For example, on the supported internship programme, tutors start by teaching learners about key workplace expectations, such as professional boundaries, timekeeping and appropriate dress. They then move on to teach more placement-specific content, such as providing effective customer service.

Tutors do not identify effectively what learners and apprentices know and can do at the start of programmes. Too often, tutors complete informal assessments and do not plan to meet learners' and apprentices' individual needs. This contributes to learners and apprentices not making good progress.

Tutors prepare learners well for the workplace environment. Tutors ensure there are a number of opportunities for learners to meet employers at the beginning of their programmes. They provide informative disability awareness training to employers. Employers understand the support needs of learners who have SEND, such as the need to use different communication strategies or language that learners can easily understand.

Tutors and employers ensure most learners develop their skills and knowledge so they can take on more responsible and challenging work with employers. For example, learners on the supported internship move from helping customers find the platform at a station, to providing more complex travel advice at the travel desk. However, in a small number of instances, learners are at placements that do not sufficiently reflect their interests or aspirations.

Tutors do not consistently use resources that are appropriate for the age of the learners, who subsequently produce work that is not always at an appropriate level. For example, tutors use resources that have been produced for primary school-age children.

Tutors do not consistently provide helpful feedback on learners' and apprentices' work. Too often, tutors do not mark work or do not give feedback. As a result, it is unclear if learners complete their work correctly, and learners do not know what they have to do to improve.

Tutors, support staff and job coaches enable most learners to develop new skills, knowledge and behaviours for employability and work. For example, learners

improve their communication skills, enabling them to improve their interaction with customers and learn how to work as part of a team. These skills prepare learners well for adulthood.

Staff support learners effectively with their emotional well-being. Tutors use learner reviews to reflect on the challenges learners have faced in learning, life and at work placements. Staff then identify internal support or inform learners of relevant community services. Staff explore strategies for ongoing support that learners can continue into their adult life. This prepares learners well for when they complete their studies.

Senior leaders do not ensure the curriculum prepares learners and apprentices for life in modern Britain. Tutors determine the topics they teach, and this differs between centres. As a result, there are inconsistencies in the topics taught to learners and apprentices such as sexual harassment, radicalisation and extremism and British values.

Tutors provide an enrichment offer at each of the centres for learners. These activities include Royal Mencap Society Olympics, visits from guest speakers and visits to leisure centres. However, too few learners access these activities or are aware of them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders and the board of governors understand well their safeguarding and legal responsibilities. They have put in place suitable reporting processes for safeguarding. Appropriately trained designated safeguarding leads manage referrals well. They have appropriate reporting processes in place and have sufficient oversight of the referrals made. Learners benefit from support from the welfare officer.

The majority of learners and apprentices feel safe and know who to contact if they have any concerns. They have a reasonable understanding of how to keep themselves safe. However, learners and apprentices do not have secure enough knowledge of the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Governors must ensure that they provide effective scrutiny of senior leaders' progress in making the improvements needed so that the quality of education that learners and apprentices receive is consistently good.
- Senior leaders must ensure the apprenticeship programme meets the requirements of an apprenticeship programme and that apprentices are on programmes that match their job roles.
- Senior leaders must ensure that learners and apprentices receive careers advice

and guidance earlier enough in their programme so they can be supported to make informed decisions about their next steps.

- Leaders must improve the outcomes for learners on the supported internship and traineeship programmes so that the majority of learners secure positive outcomes and achieve their English and mathematics qualifications.
- Tutors must identify learners' and apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours at the start of a programme so they can develop an ambitious and individual programme for learners and apprentices.

Provider details

Unique reference number	144786
Address	123 Golden Lane Islington London EC1Y 0RT
Contact number	07766776335
Website	www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/employment-services
Principal/CEO	Jason Hardman
Provider type	Independent specialist college
Date of previous inspection	25 to 28 June 2019

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of lifestyles and work, 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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