

Inspection of Elfrida Rathbone Camden - Leighton Education Project

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Inadequate
Personal development	Inadequate
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Provision for learners with high needs	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Elfrida Rathbone Camden - Leighton Education Project is an independent learning provider based in Camden. The college is located in the same building as a nursery. Learners use the same entrance as all building users. Two joint acting directors have had responsibility for the leadership of the college since February 2022.

The college provides education and training to young people aged 16 to 25 who have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including autism spectrum disorder and medical needs, such as epilepsy. At the time of the inspection, there were 17 learners with education and health care (EHC) plans who have high needs.

Most learners follow a two-year programme and study for qualifications at entry level in life skills, employability, English, mathematics and an arts award. For the first two years, they follow a personal development programme where they study independent living skills. Learners may continue to study for a third year to prepare them for employment.

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

Learners do not learn in a safe enough environment. Leaders and managers do not ensure that all staff who work with learners are suitable for their roles because they do not complete the necessary safe recruitment pre-employment checks on volunteers. Furthermore, leaders do not ensure that staff are suitably trained to administer emergency medication to learners with medical conditions, such as epilepsy. This does not guarantee a safe learning environment for these vulnerable young adults, although learners say they feel safe at the college.

Learners who have therapeutic needs, such as speech and language, do not have access to support from the full range of specialist therapy staff. As a result, these learners do not make good progress.

Staff do not sufficiently take account of learners' previous achievements, skills and knowledge at the start of the year. As a result, tutors teach a curriculum that is inadequately planned to meet learners' individual needs and learners make poor progress.

Staff have a supportive and nurturing approach with learners and celebrate their achievements. Learners have an appreciation of the achievements of their peers. Parents and carers value the caring and nurturing environment that the college provides.

Learners enjoy attending the college and most attend their lessons well. Learners are supported by staff, who show high levels of respect towards them. Learners appreciate the life-skills that they learn, and the majority go on to courses at other providers to continue learning.

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

Governors and leaders have not maintained the good standard of education evident at the previous inspection. Significant staffing issues have resulted in gaps in SEND expertise, and staff have taken on new roles without sufficient training and guidance.

Governors do not have sufficient skills and expertise in the demands of teaching learners with SEND in a further education setting. As a result, they do not provide adequate scrutiny of the provision, or challenge leaders and hold them to account. This has contributed to a marked decline in the quality of provision for learners.

Leaders do not ensure that learners are taught by staff who are experienced and qualified to teach learners with SEND. They do not have a training offer for staff to develop their specialist SEND teaching skills, knowledge and expertise. As a result, teachers do not plan and teach a sufficiently ambitious curriculum. Teachers do not challenge learners to develop the skills and knowledge they need to live more independently.

Leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculum they offer. However, the design and implementation of this curriculum is inadequate. Leaders do not ensure that the curriculum is well planned. Tutors give insufficient consideration to individual learners' needs, including those recorded in their EHC plans. They do not support learners to develop the knowledge and skills required to make progress beyond passing qualifications.

Tutors set tasks for learners that are unambitious. Too often, learners do cut and stick and colouring in activities. Tutors do not extend the skills they teach learners. For example, they do not adequately help learners to develop digital skills. Too often, there is very little difference in the quality of learners' work at the start of the programme and at the end. As a result, the majority of learners complete the same activities, and their work does not demonstrate sufficient development of their knowledge and skills.

Leaders do not ensure that learners receive timely reviews of their progress in relation to their EHC plans. Similarly, they do not ensure that learners have timely impartial advice and guidance to prepare them for their next steps.

Tutors use helpful techniques so that hat learners remain focused in lessons. For example, learners use a digital timer to help them break tasks into small achievable sections. Tutors encourage learners to celebrate each other's achievements in a supportive and respectful way. Learners show genuine support and respect for each other's achievements.

Teachers make good use of trips and visits to give learners an experience of life beyond college and their homes, which they enjoy. These include visits to local shops, museums, events and parks.

Learners who have experienced trauma benefit from working with an arts therapist. This means that, over time, their overwhelming anxieties decrease, and they can participate fully in the life of the college.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Governors and leaders fail to provide a safe environment for learners. They have not identified and taken any action to reduce the risk of possible harm that could occur to learners when members of the public access the shared building where learners attend college.

Staff have not adequately given learners the knowledge and skills to know how to protect themselves from danger. Leaders do not ensure that learners are taught how to protect themselves from risks. Teachers do not inform learners of dangers, such as from radicalisation and extremism and how to keep themselves safe.

Designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) are suitably trained. Leaders provide a daily forum for tutors to discuss any issues of concern about learners and safeguarding incidents. DSLs take appropriate actions when safeguarding issues occur.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Governors and leaders must review their recruitment practice for volunteers to ensure that they are safe to be with learners.
- Governors and leaders must ensure staff receive appropriate training to competently administer emergency medication, so that learners who require this medication are safe.
- Governors and leaders need to carry out a risk assessment and take action to ensure that learners are safe from harm when moving around the public spaces in the college.
- Leaders must develop an ambitious curriculum that incorporates learners' individual needs, so that learners gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours to enable them to make good progress and achieve their goals.
- Leaders must ensure that tutors assess what learners know and can do at the start of the course and use this information to provide individualised programmes. They should record the progress learners make towards their EHC plan outcomes and aspirations.
- Leaders must plan a curriculum that teaches learners how to protect themselves from possible harm, including from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Governors and leaders must make sure that learners are taught and supported by staff who are suitably qualified and experienced to work with young people with SEND in the further education sector.
- Leaders should make sure that learners receive independent careers advice in a timely manner to prepare them for their next steps.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51701
Address	7 Dowdney Close London NW5 2BP
Contact number	02074241601
Website	www.elfridacamden.org.uk
Principal/CEO	Samantha Childs
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	19 April 2016
Main subcontractors	No sub-contractors

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the interim director, 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

Joyce Deere, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Joanna Walters

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jon Bowman

Her Majesty's Inspector

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