

Inspection of Newfriars College

Inspection dates:

21–23 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Provision for students with high needs

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Newfriars College was established as an independent specialist college in September 2018. It provides programmes for young people aged 16 to 25 from pre-entry level to level 2. Students have moderate to complex/profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students access individualised programmes from three pathways: supported living; independent living; and vocational learning. Programmes focus on preparing young people for employment and greater independence to support their transition to adulthood. The college has a wide catchment area with students attending from four local authorities, Stoke-On-Trent, Staffordshire, Cheshire, and Shropshire. At the time of the monitoring visit, 179 students attended the college.

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

Students enjoy learning and talk confidently about what they have learned at college. They achieve vocationally relevant qualifications and learn from a wide range of experiences. As such, students develop high levels of confidence and resilience that prepare them well for working and living more independently.

Students develop substantial knowledge, skills and behaviours that prepare them well for employment. However, in a few cases, teaching and learning do not provide students with sufficient challenge to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.

Students consistently conduct themselves extremely well at college and attend regularly. They are keen to work hard and take pride in their achievements.

Students feel safe at college and are confident to approach staff if they have concerns. There is a culture of respect for their peers and for staff. Students understand how to keep themselves safe online when using social media outside college. They have a good understanding of healthy relationships and how to maintain good mental and physical health.

Students benefit from opportunities to develop their interests and talents through a wide range of enrichment opportunities. These experiences develop students' confidence and prepare them well for living in their local communities.

Students do not yet benefit from access to a wide range of therapies as part of their curriculum. They can participate in music and LEGO therapy; however, too few students benefit from regular therapeutic input.

Students receive regular careers advice and guidance from qualified careers advisers. Students take part in employability sessions and explore aspirational and realistic work opportunities for when they leave college.

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

Leaders and managers have developed an aspirational curriculum aimed at preparing students well for working and living more independently. They have recently implemented three curriculum pathways to meet the diverse needs of their students. These include vocational, independent living and supported living, with an appropriate mix of teacher assessed and accredited qualifications. Students can access curriculum across pathways to support their transition to adulthood.

Under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, staff work with energy and commitment to produce a positive climate in which students excel. Staff create opportunities for students to achieve outstanding personal development and

improvements in behaviour and attitudes. Examples include speaking at a national conference to forty delegates, writing, performing and filming a health and safety video for a national competition.

Leaders have rightly worked hard to establish a presence in the community to provide students with real work experiences. In addition to the supported internship through Project Search, they work with local employers, including TESCO, Stoke City Football Club, Hilton Garden Inn, and Shopping Buddies for local care homes. As a result, students learn skills for work through industry-standard placements that prepare them well for paid and voluntary employment.

Leaders are highly ambitious for all their students. Students develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours in a structured and supported way in the college before accessing the community to practise and secure their skills. For example, a few students progress to supported internships where they learn to work independently in a hospital setting. Students with complex needs develop their communication skills in a familiar setting before moving out into the wider college and then the community, where they can express their choices.

Teachers rightly develop the curriculum to enable students to increase their confidence and communication skills to work as independently as possible. Teachers know their students well and are focused on fully understanding their likes and motivations alongside their education, health and care plan (EHCP) outcomes. For example, in supported living, students with targets of making eye contact or using Makaton to say, 'thank you' deliver enterprise items purchased by staff so that they can recall and practise their targets. However, the pace of some teaching is too slow, and activities lack challenge. As a result, a few students are passive and do not make rapid enough progress.

Teachers mostly plan the curriculum well to build the skills that students need for adulthood. However, the implementation of the curriculum is inconsistent across the curriculum pathways. Too frequently the sequencing of the curriculum is led by the qualification competencies, and there is insufficient focus on students building on what they already know and can do to secure new knowledge and skills. For example, students undertake structured qualifications in English and mathematics on vocational pathway programmes. However, in some cases, the embedding and development of literacy and numeracy skills of students does not continue in a structured way throughout their curriculum. As a result, a few students do not continue to develop new skills they need for future employment.

Teachers use prompts well to encourage independent thinking and decision making. However, staff do not always communicate effectively with those students who require high levels of support to access the curriculum. For example, staff provide hand-over-hand support to students without interacting with them to explain the purpose, or to establish if they want to engage with the activity.

Teachers give most students useful feedback. However, feedback is not always specific enough to the individual student. Teachers too frequently use descriptive

language about the group's activity, and whether the student engaged and enjoyed the activity. As a result, students do not all receive sufficient developmental feedback to know what to do to improve.

Teachers set targets for students linked to their EHCP, however too often these are too broad. Targets are not sufficiently broken down to enable teachers to plan an effective curriculum and do not always reflect what the student currently knows and can do. As a result, a few students do not have relevant or sufficiently challenging targets to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.

Teachers use communication tools such as 'widget' symbols, Makaton, 'now and next' boards and switches effectively to support students. However, students do not all benefit from accessing a wide range of assistive technology to advocate for themselves. For example, students experience considerable delays in accessing communication devices to enable them to develop greater independence through improved communication. Leaders are working collaboratively with multi-agencies to secure improved access to resources and therapies for students in line with their EHCP outcomes.

Teachers use written, observational, and qualification-based assessments to measure students' progress. For example, assessed work shows that students are making progress in improving their communication and writing. In sports, cookery, business, and mechanics, students repeat practical activities to embed and use the knowledge fluently. As a result, students secure unit-based accreditation. However, teachers' use of assessment is inconsistently applied across the different subjects. As such, it is difficult to assess students' progress over time and measure the effectiveness of interventions for students making less than expected progress.

Leaders have implemented a highly effective personal development curriculum that develops students' social, independence and employability skills. Students can choose enrichment activities such as, singing, dancing and art clubs, swimming, gym and football. Students visit coffee shops and theatres in their local community as well as trips to theme parks, a caravan holiday in Wales and an outdoor activity holiday. Further examples include, an aspiring teacher gaining experience in a local day care centre, a future sports coach volunteering as a children's coach, a talented cook working in the college kitchen, supported interns learning essential skills in local hospitals. As a result, a few students have secured vocationally relevant jobs.

Leaders and managers prepare students well for transitioning from college. They work collaboratively with students, families, and multi-agencies. Leaders track the destinations of leavers well and use this information to inform changes to the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of their students. In 2021, all students had positive destinations, including further study, supported internships, paid and supported employment, and adult social care.

Teachers promote equality and diversity effectively. Students demonstrate respect for each other in sessions and are accepting of those that are different from them. They understand democracy and are represented well by an inclusive and active student

council. Students show pride in being part of an inclusive and supportive environment and are passionate about respecting others, especially those who are different.

Leaders have successfully implemented a whole-college approach to positive behaviour support planning. Key staff are accredited trainers, and all staff receive annual training. As a result, staff are well informed about students' known behaviours, how to recognise antecedents and prevent behaviours escalating. When incidents occur, suitable arrangements and interventions are swiftly developed and recorded, and learning from incidents is shared.

Teaching staff are mostly well qualified and experienced. Where staff are not qualified, they access training and mentoring to gain the skills and competencies for teaching. Staff attend regular in-service training and twilight sessions with a focus on sharing best practice. As a result, staff use their initiative to create systems better to support students to understand their progress, such as visual trackers and a survey to families to capture the impact of students' learning in the home.

Leaders produce an annual self-assessment report and quality improvement plan to identify ways improve standards of education at the college. For example, leaders have recently introduced a new management structure to support teachers in implementing the curriculum pathways. Managers undertake a wide range of quality assurance activities including, regular performance reviews, learning walks and work sampling, which results in appropriate interventions. Although managers are undertaking many improvement actions, they do not make explicit how much progress is being made against the quality improvement plan to secure improvements to the quality of education swiftly.

Leaders have established a well-qualified and experienced governing body with the appropriate skills to support and challenge managers effectively. Governors visit the college regularly and have link roles related to their expertise. They receive regular and detailed reports and use them as the basis for appropriately challenging discussions. Governors do not set formal key performance indicators for the college and as a result do not have a clear benchmark against which to challenge in-year performance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed an effective culture of safeguarding. They have written appropriate safeguarding and behaviour-management policies, with clear procedures for their implementation and close monitoring. Managers ensure they adhere to safer recruitment practices for new staff and maintain accurate records of the checks made.

Leaders have appointed an appropriately trained designated safeguarding lead and wider team to identify, help and protect students from a wide range of risks. Managers have developed an appropriate 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and plan. They use risk assessments and early indicators of concern well to provide rapid early intervention. Managers maintain good links with external key stakeholders and know to whom they should report concerns or from whom to seek advice. However, too few students have a

personal emergency evacuation plan. Managers have plans to increase the assurance of keeping students safe in the case of emergencies, both on the college site and when accessing community facilities.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must ensure that all teachers plan and sequence the curriculum to develop students' knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to their learning and support needs, as outlined in their EHCPs.
- Leaders must ensure that assessment processes are consistently applied across all pathways to ensure progress is closely monitored and the risk of students falling behind is quickly established; leaders should follow this with swift intervention and evaluation of the impact of the intervention to ensure all students achieve their potential.
- Leaders must ensure that teachers set targets that accurately reflect students' starting points and what they already know and can do to support them to make swift progress towards achieving their planned outcomes.
- Leaders should increase opportunities for students to practise English and mathematics skills beyond qualifications, so that students are confident in the workplace.
- Leaders must ensure that they meet the therapeutic needs of all students through access to therapies and assistive technologies.
- Leaders must ensure that all identified students have personal emergency evacuation plans to increase the assurance of keeping students safe, in the event of emergencies both on- and off-site.

Provider details

Unique reference number	146526
Address	Castle Grove Newhouse Road Bucknall Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire ST2 8BH
Contact number	01782987180
Website	www.newfriarscollege.org.uk
Headteacher	Rob Millington
Provider type	Independent Specialist College
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy head of college, 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 students' work, seeking the views of students, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Tina Pagett, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kay Hedges	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Gay	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Ward	Her Majesty's 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 students 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.

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/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022