

# Inspection of Lifeworks College

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 October 2022

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

The quality of education	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Provision for students with high needs	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

Lifeworks College is an independent specialist college based in Dartington, Devon. It is part of a group managed by Lifeworks Charity Limited. The college is a small day college that offers study programmes, taught over 36 weeks, for students up to 24 years of age who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. At the time of the visit, there were 20 students between 16 and 23 years of age studying at the college. Most students have moderate or specific learning difficulties, such as autism spectrum disorder or behavioural and emotional difficulties. All students have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Ofsted inspected the college in February 2016 and judged its overall effectiveness to be good. The inspection report was not published, because while the Department of Education approved the college to educate and train students with EHC plans, the college was actually funded by Devon County Council. In August 2018, the Education and Skills Funding Agency became the funding body for the college's provision for learners with high needs. Under this funding arrangement the college received a safeguarding monitoring visit in September 2020 and a monitoring visit in May 2021. Both visits judged the college to be making reasonable progress.

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

Students acquire new work skills, knowledge and improved behaviours and achieve recognised qualifications in employment and life skills, English, mathematics, arts and Duke of Edinburgh's Award. However, tutors do not set work for students that is sufficiently ambitious. Too many students are not being challenged to complete work to the best of their abilities. Consequently, their progress is slow and students are staying at the college longer than they need.

Staff value students as individuals and support them to stay safe in a respectful environment. Staff have created an inclusive and nurturing college where students can be themselves. Students respect each other's differences. They learn how to take turns. They are polite and confident enough to ask peers to give them more space when they need it.

Students are proud to be part of the college community and they make friends easily. Staff place students in well-planned work placements that match their aspirations and encourage their independence. Students learn to improve their physical and mental well-being because staff focus well on their personal development.

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

Leaders have very recently implemented new ambitious, varied and relevant curriculums. These are welcomed by parents because the new curriculums are designed to prepare students better for employment and their adult lives. However, it is too early to see the impact of these new curriculums on students' experience or progress. As a result, the needs of all current students are not being met well enough.

Teaching staff do not all demonstrate sufficient ambition for learners' educational development, and as a result students' achievement rates are low and the quality of learners' work is not consistently high enough.

Tutors do not establish at the start of courses what all students can already do or what they know. Tutors do not plan classroom-based learning activities which are sufficiently challenging, and they do not ensure that students build knowledge and skills swiftly and progressively over time. For example, in mathematics lessons, students are expected to count to ten, when most could already count to 20.

Tutors do not provide students with constructive feedback which helps them to improve. Feedback is generally only positive, which means students are praised for their work but do not know how to make it better. As a result, students do not make the progress they should and are not being sufficiently well prepared to move on to their next steps. Tutors do not all set targets for students that are specific enough or link well to the intended outcomes in the students' EHC plans. For instance, students

may simply be encouraged to 'communicate more effectively', or 'reduce worrying time' without being given a context or indication about what the student should do.

Managers have been slow to arrange routine specialist therapeutic and specialist support, such as speech and language and hydrotherapy. However, they have acted promptly to agree interventions with external agencies that enable students to continue their studies. For example, they worked with social services and the intensive support and treatment team to help students who struggled with resuming their education after COVID-19.

Students receive high-quality, impartial, individualised careers advice and guidance from a qualified careers adviser. The adviser liaises closely with staff and students to identify appropriate work placements. These work placements reflect students' interests and their long-term outcomes in EHC plans. As a result, students improve their self-confidence, social skills and ability to work more independently. For example, students working in a community cafe are now able to communicate with customers and initiate conversations with staff colleagues. However, while students are better prepared for work, too few of them end up gaining paid sustainable employment.

Lifeworks college staff are professionally qualified and experienced. They know the personal development and behavioural needs of their students. Most use suitable techniques and age-appropriate resources to improve students' behaviour. As a result, students receive high-quality pastoral support from staff who are quickly able to identify triggers and de-escalate situations that may cause emotional or behavioural barriers to learning. Students improve their behaviour over time and become less reliant on support.

Staff use technologies and Makaton effectively and sensitively to enable students with complex communication needs to participate and advocate for themselves. This means that students build strong bonds with their peers and staff. They can explain clearly how they feel more confident and able to articulate their views and concerns. Students are kind to each other and do not accept bullying or harassment of their peers.

Staff are good role models for students and practice a culture of mutual respect and tolerance. Staff frequently celebrate students' success during lessons, which helps students appreciate each other's work. Staff and parents celebrate students' end of year achievements. Students are proud to share what they have done and achieved.

Leaders have recently implemented a tutorial programme which has improved students' understanding of how to use mobile phones safely. Students can explain the dangers of cyberbullying, sharing inappropriate images and personal information and know to keep their phones safe from theft.

Leaders have invested in the physical learning environments, and students can now access a wide range of varied spaces used for classroom and social learning.

College staff maintain good relationships with employers, parents and carers. They contact staff with any concerns and feel confident that they will be resolved promptly. Managers have recently implemented an effective approach to home-college communication that parents and carers are finding valuable and which helps them to support students' learning at home. Parents are consistently and positively involved in decision-making and are confident about the new college leadership team.

The recently appointed chief executive officer and trustees have the relevant experience and expertise to provide appropriate challenge and support to senior leaders and managers. However, trustees do not receive sufficient information about the quality of education and how well students are progressing. They recognise current skills gaps on the board and are seeking further appointments to help move forward with improvement actions they have already identified.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have implemented appropriate and effective safeguarding policies and procedures. Designated safeguarding leads, staff and trustees have completed appropriate training. Students are safe at the centre, during work placements, personal development and during off-site activities. Staff conduct risk assessments at the college and employers' premises to ensure that students work in safe environments. Employers understand the support they need to provide for students.

Staff ensure that students have an appropriate understanding of healthy relationships, including sexual relationships and consent. Leaders have ensured that safer recruitment procedures are effective and thorough.

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

- Leaders should ensure that all students are being challenged and supported to complete work to the best of their abilities so that they have the best chances of progressing to paid employment or further training.
- Leaders and staff should ensure that students are set individualised targets that are ambitious and help all students to swiftly achieve the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed for their next stage of education, employment or independence.
- Leaders should provide staff with training so that they use information about students' starting points effectively in order to plan high-quality individual learning programmes.
- Leaders and managers should improve the coordination and provision of routine specialist therapy assessments and support so that all students receive additional support when they need it.

- Trustees and senior leaders should be provided with the information that tells them about students' progress and the quality of education, to enable them to make informed decisions on improvements needed.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142065
<b>Address</b>	Lescaze Shinners Bridge Dartington Totnes Devon TQ9 6JD
<b>Contact number</b>	01803 865 075
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.lifeworkscollege.org">www.lifeworkscollege.org</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Laura Fraser-Crewes
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent specialist college
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	23 to 25 February 2016

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of college, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection reports. 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, work placements, scrutinising students' work, seeking the views of students, staff, and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

Lyn Bourne, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lois Knight	Ofsted Inspector
Sara Hunter	Ofsted Inspector

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 tutor 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](mailto: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/](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022