

Inspection of Hedleys College

Inspection dates:

2 to 4 November 2022

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

Information about this provider

Hedleys College is an independent specialist college that is part of the Percy Hedley Foundation. The college provides education and support for young people who have complex learning difficulties and disabilities and require specialist individual programmes. It operates from two sites in Newcastle upon Tyne, including a centre called the Hub that caters for students with particularly complex needs.

At the time of the inspection, there were 78 students with high needs enrolled on education programmes. Students follow one of six pathways. Fifteen students were on the communication and choices pathway, 19 were on the independence pathway, 12 were on the independence and enterprise pathway, 15 were on the employability pathway, 14 were on bespoke programmes, and fewer than five were on the foundation for work programme.

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

Students benefit from learning in an inclusive and calm environment where they are encouraged to participate and are often pushed beyond their comfort zone. Staff use effective techniques to manage students' complex needs and any challenging behaviour. When issues arise, staff are calm and use de-escalation strategies very effectively.

Students enjoy their learning and attend college well. Staff monitor students' attendance rigorously and implement effective processes to ensure it remains high. This includes having frequent contact with parents and carers, undertaking home visits and providing individualised support for students who have missed considerable amounts of learning.

The on-site therapeutic teams provide very effective support to students by working closely with specialist support staff and tutors. Services include speech and language sessions, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, incorporating use of the hydro pool. These services help students to make good progress in developing their communication skills and physical stamina.

Students benefit from very effective one-to-one support, which helps them to develop their character and confidence. Staff encourage students to work as independently as possible and ask them to identify when they need support. At other times, they encourage students to work with different groups of their peers so that they increase their confidence in working with people with whom they are unfamiliar.

Students benefit from an extensive enrichment programme which they access every week. They select a different activity each term and frequently choose options that they have never done before. For example, students participate in boxercise, learn the skills of a disc jockey and take classes in singing in British Sign Language. They also attend residentials, complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and attend circus skills and adaptive surf sessions.

Tutors provide a comprehensive personal development curriculum for students that supports the development of their understanding of British values and the importance of these values in their everyday lives. Students are respectful and polite towards staff and their peers in the classroom, during their breaks and at lunchtime. Most students listen when their peers are talking, and tutors ensure that students who have difficulties listening to others have this as a target in their individual learning plan.

Students feel safe in college. They know that they can speak to their tutors if they are worried. Students often refer to their classroom as their 'safe space'.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders have expanded the provision so that more students can benefit from the care and education provided by leaders and staff at the college. Leaders have successfully sustained the quality of education that students receive. Students benefit from an integrated programme of well-established, on-site therapeutic services. Staff also provide extensive support to students, which is highly appreciated by parents and carers.

Leaders recruit tutors and specialist support staff who are well qualified and have significant experience of working with students who have high needs. Tutors use their experience and expertise to plan challenging and engaging lessons that meet the needs of their students. In addition, staff attend useful training to improve their teaching skills further and to update their specialist subject knowledge. For example, they attend training on autism spectrum disorder, hearing impairments and Makaton to help them communicate more effectively with students. Therapy staff learn about dysphagia, which enables them to train colleagues to support students to eat and drink safely.

Tutors complete a thorough initial and diagnostic assessment of students when they start at college to accurately assess what students can and cannot do. This information is used very well by personal tutors to identify appropriate learning outcomes, which help students to make progress towards the long-term goals and aspirations outlined in their education, health and care plans. Students successfully develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours while at college. However, a few tutors who teach enrichment sessions do not plan the curriculum to enable students to work towards their individual targets.

Leaders and managers provide students with personalised learning programmes that prepare them well for adulthood. There is a strong focus on developing students' independence, confidence and self-esteem. Students who enrol on foundations for work and employability programmes have long-term aspirations to gain paid or voluntary employment. Tutors provide activities that focus on developing skills for the world of work by training students in real and practical working environments, such as in a cafe and in pop-up shops. Students make good progress towards becoming prepared for life beyond the college.

Tutors use a wide range of assessment activities very effectively to check if students understand what they have been taught. Staff use directed questioning to check that individuals understand the verbal instructions given to them. Students are observed in practical sessions and take part in group discussions. Tutors ensure that all students are fully participating in their learning. Most tutors provide clear feedback on written work that helps students to improve their work. However, a few tutors make comments that are too general and do not identify precisely what students need to do to improve.

Tutors help students to develop their English and mathematical skills. Students increase their reading skills through the use of word-image association, and can identify a range of appropriate vocabulary that they use to make choices and express preferences when choosing food items during shopping trips. Students also develop numeracy skills, such as counting money, which they put into practice when shopping in the local community. However, too many tutors at the Hub use resources that are not age-appropriate as they are designed to be used with young children and not those preparing for adulthood.

Specialist support staff have a very good understanding of the needs of their students, and use a range of supportive strategies and interventions to enable students to engage fully in all aspects of their learning. For example, they reduce students' anxieties by allowing them to take short, scheduled breaks. Staff are careful not to over-support and ensure that they give students time to process information and answer questions. However, a few specialist support tutors do not consistently provide students with sufficient time to process information. They sometimes use vocabulary that students struggle to understand. On the foundation for work programme, specialist support tutors do not identify quickly enough when students require support.

Students benefit from an excellent learning environment at the Hub that is well equipped. The centre provides a positive learning environment for students with complex needs in which they can develop their independence and learn to manage and regulate any challenging behaviour. However, at the main college building, students do not benefit from a computer room that is conducive to learning. The room is too small to provide an appropriate learning environment for students.

Leaders make good use of the high-needs funding that they receive. Students use a range of assistive technologies which are effective in promoting inclusion and developing their communication skills. For example, non-verbal students use speech-generating applications in lessons, which enable them to engage and interact in all aspects of their learning.

Leaders and managers are considerate of the workload of staff and their well-being. They understand the demands of working with students with complex needs. They respond positively when staff raise issues with their workload and ensure that staff have time to carry out their duties. Staff benefit from team-building events such as quizzes and social evenings. The vast majority of staff are proud to work at the college.

Governors and trustees are committed to their roles, helping to support and improve the lives of students at the college. They demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development and successfully hold senior leaders to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers follow safe recruitment processes rigorously to ensure that staff are safe to work with students. All staff hold current Disclosure and Barring Service certificates, and managers check employees' right to work in the United Kingdom. Staff follow college safeguarding procedures thoroughly, ensuring they focus effectively on students' emotional and physical well-being.

The designated safeguarding officers have established good links between the college and local authorities, health professionals, parents and carers. They focus appropriately on the individual needs of students and know how to keep students safe. When incidents occur, staff take rigorous and swift action in response, and involve external agencies where appropriate.

Risk assessments for students are comprehensive and individualised. When incidents occur, assessments are updated appropriately. Individual students' risks are managed well to ensure both staff and student safety.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all tutors teaching enrichment sessions help students to work towards their individual targets.
- Ensure that all specialist support tutors consistently support students to access their learning and allow students time to process information before stepping in to help.
- Ensure that all parts of the learning environment are suitable for the activities taking place and the size of the group.
- Ensure that all resources and teaching materials are age-appropriate.
- Ensure that all tutors provide meaningful and precise comments on students' work that focus on what students need to do to improve.

Provider details

Unique reference number	141240
Address	Station Road Forest Hall Newcastle upon Tyne NE12 8YY
Contact number	01912 127853
Website	http://www.percyhedley.org.uk/college
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Joanne Rees Proud
Provider type	Independent specialist college
Date of previous inspection	March 2020
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, 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

Hayley Lomas, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Rachel Angus	His Majesty's Inspector
Neil Clark	Ofsted Inspector

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