

Phoenix Autism Trust

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector:	Sue Hasty, His Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent specialist college
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From autumn 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to independent specialist colleges newly Education and Skills Funding Agency-funded from August 2018 onwards. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Phoenix Autism Trust is an independent specialist college based in east London. It provides specialist courses for learners aged 19 to 25 with complex autism spectrum disorders.

At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 43 learners studying at the college. Most learners study the Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) course. Four learners study on supported internship programmes.

All learners have education, health and care plans (EHC plan).

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant learning programmes that are clearly defined and tailored to suit the individual needs of learners? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders have planned an appropriate curriculum to prepare learners for adulthood and the world of work. Within the last year, leaders have thoughtfully redesigned courses so that they focus sharply on employment outcomes for learners and on supporting learners to achieve qualifications in English and mathematics. Leaders have high ambitions for all learners to leave college with paid employment. It is too soon to evaluate the full impact of these changes.

Leaders work closely with local employers to develop meaningful work experience placements for learners. Teachers and employers discuss frequently the tasks and activities learners will carry out at work so that they gain appropriate new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, while working at the library, learners improve their knowledge of numeracy and literacy by sorting books by numbers and letters. In retail outlets, learners gain confidence and communication skills when demonstrating products and directing customers to seasonal displays.

Leaders have re-evaluated their staffing structure and have created new tutor roles in the teaching team. Leaders provide tutors with suitable professional development

to improve their specialist knowledge of working with learners with autism spectrum disorder. For example, they receive training in understanding learners' non-verbal gestures and in using physical restraint. However, leaders have not planned a programme to develop tutors' teaching skills.

Leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching is effective in its focus on how well learners achieve their learning goals. However, they have been slow to assess the quality of teaching more comprehensively. Leaders have made a start in identifying strengths and areas for improvement through learning walks. For example, they recognise good practice in setting clear aims for a lesson.

How much progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality learning programmes that develop independence, communication and skills and help them to achieve their personal and/or work-related goals? Reasonable progress

Leaders plan effectively to meet learners' individual goals identified in their EHC plans. Staff set clear annual and termly targets for learners based on EHC plan outcomes for learning, independent living, health and relationships. Leaders review learners' progress against these targets weekly. However, other than in English and mathematics, leaders do not identify clearly what learners can do at the start of their programmes. Consequently, they have a limited overview of how much progress learners make in vocational subjects such as travel and tourism.

Leaders have planned a well-structured programme of learning on supported internships. Job coaches ensure that learners are in job roles that match their career aspirations. For example, learners aiming to work in the digital sector move around departments to gain a broad range of experiences in digital marketing and electrical engineering. They develop complex new skills such as how to create QR codes and blog posts. Learners are well prepared to make choices about their next steps towards their intended careers.

Leaders have designed appropriate study programmes for learners on PfA courses. These include the core subjects of English, mathematics and digital skills. Learners have a wide choice of additional subjects to study such as catering and horticulture. However, leaders have not planned coherently how knowledge learned in different vocational subjects connects. For example, tutors do not make clear to learners the connections between what they learn in horticulture about growing vegetables and what they learn in catering about how vegetables are cooked. This limits learners' ability to understand and remember what they have been taught.

On work experience placements at the farm, tutors use practical demonstrations effectively to teach learners new skills. For example, they give step-by-step instructions as they show learners how to harness a donkey safely. As a result, learners can competently put into practice the new skills they learn.

In a few instances, tutors do not adequately reinforce learning from previous lessons. They do not check effectively what learners remember before introducing new topics.

Leaders have developed a suitable curriculum that covers safeguarding topics. Tutors teach learners effectively about issues such as body image. However, they do not teach learners how to stay safe online or about healthy adult relationships.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Significant progress

Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding across all aspects of their provision. Designated safeguarding team members are very well trained and experienced. Leaders provide staff with weekly briefings on safeguarding topics such as good practice in managing learners' personal care.

Leaders have put in place detailed safeguarding policies and procedures which staff carefully follow. For example, staff complete thorough risk assessments, authorised by a member of the safeguarding team, before taking learners out on every work placement visit. Learners are very safe in the college and the community.

Leaders make sure that the staff they recruit are suitable to work with their learners. They carry out comprehensive pre-employment checks and record these in well-organised files.

Leaders and staff identify and record safeguarding concerns thoroughly. They monitor and follow through rigorously on any actions required.

Leaders have appropriate 'Prevent' duty risk assessments and action plans in place. They have yet to identify the specific risks for the localities in which learners study and visit.

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