

Inspection of LifeBridge ASEND

Inspection dates:

7 to 9 June 2023

Overall effectiveness**Good**

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Information about this provider

LifeBridge ASEND is an independent specialist college based in Bolton in Greater Manchester. The college was established in 2015 and achieved independent status in September 2016. The college provides programmes for learners aged between 19 and 25 years who have moderate to severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are two pathway programmes from entry level to level 2: the independence pathway and the employability pathway. Programmes focus on preparing young people towards independence and/or voluntary or paid employment. At the time of the inspection, there were 16 learners on the independence pathway and 21 learners on the employability pathway.

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

Leaders and staff promote a positive learning environment where learners can flourish. Lessons are calm and productive. Learners develop respectful relationships with their peers and staff and feel confident about trying new activities in safe and supportive surroundings.

Staff set high expectations around learners' attendance, punctuality and behaviour. Learners develop a strong understanding of the importance of reliability and respect in the workplace and in the community. Where possible, learners develop independent travel skills, and almost half of learners travel independently to college.

Learners enjoy their experiences at the college. They are motivated and cooperative in lessons and appreciate being treated as adults. Learners are proud of their achievements and recognise that what they learn helps them to become more independent in their daily lives, such as being able to cook their own meals.

On rare occasions when learners become distracted, tutors support learners calmly so that the situation is quickly defused, and learners can resume their work promptly. Consequently, learners learn how to self-regulate and control their emotions effectively.

Learners demonstrate a clear understanding of fundamental British values. For example, following news footage on the war between Russia and the Ukraine, learners were able to explain accurately the fundamental differences between each country.

Learners feel safe at college. They feel comfortable in sharing any concerns with staff and are confident that staff will help them.

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

Leaders are ambitious for their learners. They have developed curriculums that meet most learners' needs and aspirations. For example, on the employability pathway, learners develop the skills that they need to progress into meaningful employment. The independence curriculum is relevant to learners who need further support to develop the skills they need to increase their independence in their daily lives. However, for a few learners on this pathway, the pace of progress is too slow.

Learners on the employability pathway and a minority of learners on the independence pathway undertake relevant work experience. These placements are mostly in areas where learners hope to work in the future. Current placements include a prestigious health club, a dog grooming salon, a children's nursery, food manufacturing, charity shops and work in horticulture. Staff ensure that work experience meets learners' individual and health needs and helps them to develop skills such as timekeeping, how to follow instructions and working with others.

Tutors ensure that the curriculums are planned logically. They set tasks for learners according to their ability and remind learners what they have achieved previously, such as in their work placements, to help them to develop new ideas for their current learning. For example, in mathematics, learners on the employability pathway consider individual questions relating to their work placements, such as producing tally charts of the number of different types of coffee they have sold. Learners who have a stronger mathematical ability interpret data shown on graphs confidently and accurately. In the independence curriculum, learners increase their life and social skills. They develop their English and mathematical skills incrementally in a range of everyday contexts that help them to increase their independence.

Leaders and tutors know their learners very well. Most learners transition to the college from the associated special school. However, leaders acknowledge that they need to improve their assessment of learners' starting points further. For example, they recognise the importance of identifying what learners already know and can do across a range of different activities such as in the kitchen and in social areas.

All learners work towards qualifications in English and mathematics. Tutors prepare learners for English examinations by developing their speaking and listening skills through the discussion of topics such as applying for jobs and dealing with customer complaints. Learners speak confidently and are happy to be videoed during activities so that they can see how they can improve their responses.

Most learners make at least the progress expected of them against their learning targets. Tutors personalise and contextualise these targets to meet most learners' needs and aspirations. For example, English targets for learners who are preparing to leave the college include developing their reading skills by researching options for life after college. As a result, these learners become accustomed to applying English skills to their daily lives. However, on a few occasions, targets are not written clearly enough or do not link to previous targets to identify the progress that learners make over time. In a few instances, mathematics targets for employability learners' focus too much on learners practising mathematical concepts. Tutors do not relate them fully to the different contexts that learners experience in life and at work.

Leaders have introduced appropriate arrangements to monitor the quality of their provision. They review progress against quality improvement actions regularly. Leaders have rectified all weaknesses identified at their previous inspection.

Staff enjoy working at the college and feel that leaders support their well-being effectively. They take part in regular staff development activities that help them to develop the skills they need to support their learners, such as training in autistic spectrum disorder, epilepsy, Irlen syndrome and sleep apnoea. Staff are well qualified to teach learners who have high needs.

Leaders use the high-needs funding that they receive effectively. Where learners need specialist support, such as speech and language therapy, access to this support is not always readily available. Leaders have taken steps to secure external services for the few learners with these specialist needs. However, leaders acknowledge that

this is an ongoing area for development.

Governors have a wide range of skills that they use effectively to support and challenge the leadership team. They have a strong oversight of the effectiveness and quality of the provision. Governors challenge leaders regularly around the appropriateness and effectiveness of the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Learners are safe at the college and when on external activities such as work placements. Staff promote healthy relationships through discussion and questionnaires that help learners to safely explore topics such as online safety, contraception and pornography. Learners can talk confidently about good and bad relationships and where they would go if they needed advice.

All staff, including the designated safeguarding leads, receive appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Safeguarding disclosure/referral records are detailed and clear. They include referrals to appropriate external agencies and professionals where appropriate. Leaders ensure that learners and their families are supported sensitively and effectively.

Leaders undertake appropriate checks on the suitability of staff to work with their learners. Leaders corrected the few, minor administrative errors in their records during the inspection.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that the pace of learning for more-able learners on the independence pathway allows them to make the swift progress that they are capable of achieving.
- Leaders should improve their initial and baseline assessments of learners' starting points to ensure that they understand what learners already know and can do in a variety of different settings. They should then use this information to plan challenging curriculums for all learners.
- Leaders should ensure that all tutors write learning targets in language that learners can understand easily, and that targets for mathematics reflect the different contexts that all learners would find useful in life or at work.
- Leaders should ensure that they secure the services of specialist professionals for a few identified learners quickly.

Provider details

Unique reference number	142922
Address	Armadale Road Ladybridge Bolton Greater Manchester BL3 4TP
Contact number	01204391038
Website	www.lifebridgeasend.weebly.com/
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Jane Haslam
Provider type	Independent specialist college
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 January 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 learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Suzanne Wainwright, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Bernie White	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Gay	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 learners 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 2023