

Inspection of Downs View Life Skills College

Inspection dates:

9 to 11 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Downs View Life Skills College (DVLSC) is an independent specialist college that was established in 2018. It was formerly part of Downs View School and College. DVLSC provides specialist education and support for young people aged 19 to 24 at entry level or below. The provision focuses on preparing learners for independent living and/or employment. There are currently 36 learners attending the college. Learners have significant and complex learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, or autism spectrum disorder.

DVLSC offers three curriculum pathways. These comprise a pre-entry learning for life programme, which is based on recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA), a foundation programme, and an employment pathway. Most learners follow the learning for life curriculum. All learners enhance their programme with accredited qualifications.

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

Learners enjoy attending college. The majority of learners have a positive attitude towards their studies and arrive at college ready to learn. Most communicate enthusiastically about their learning. They feel safe and well cared for. They benefit from participating in practical activities, such as cricket and dance. This supports them in developing an active lifestyle.

Learners benefit from a well-planned curriculum that enables them to explore their interests and needs. Staff plan lessons that promote learners' awareness and understanding of topics such as environmental issues, digital skills, healthy eating and keeping physically healthy. Learners increase their confidence, resilience and capacity to communicate. They are better able to express their wishes and, in turn, improve their ability to make their own life choices.

Learners benefit from a wide range of opportunities to participate in activities outside college. Learners enjoy visits to the job centre, cafés, garden centres and local charities. These visits widen their view of the world and promote physical activity, social interaction and creativity.

Learners attend well. The majority of learners' absences are due to ill health and medical appointments. Staff support learners to catch up on any work they have missed. When learners are not able to leave their residential setting, staff provide them with learning materials that maintain their engagement in learning.

Learners have access to facilities that meet their physical needs. Since the monitoring visit, the building has been refurbished further improving learners' ability to access learning with enhanced specialist equipment, such as hoists, that enables learners to participate safely in learning.

Learners do not receive sufficient support to understand appropriate social behaviours. Staff do not consistently identify over-familiar and intrusive behaviours or put in place support that enables learners to understand the boundaries of behaviours they should follow.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear, strategic vision to prepare learners for adulthood. Leaders have planned a curriculum that enables learners to develop their confidence, self-awareness, and communication and social skills. Through work placements, learners develop knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable them to progress into paid or voluntary work.

Staff create a calm and welcoming learning environment that enables learning to take place. Learners are provided with communication and learning devices, such as computer tablets. Specialist software supports learners' communication using symbols, charts and images. This supports them to access the curriculum effectively

and to communicate with staff and their peers.

Leaders recruit teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) who are well qualified and experienced in working with learners with complex learning needs. Staff benefit from a broad range of useful training, such as in eye-gaze technology, that enables them to support learners effectively.

Teachers and LSAs confidently provide the specialist support learners require, such as through the use of a commercial programme of communication through touch and music. This helps learners with sensory impairment, developmental delay, complex learning difficulties, tactile defensiveness, and limited or pre-verbal levels of communication to communicate with staff and their peers.

Leaders are ambitious for learners. They collaborate with parents and carers to plan each learner's curriculum and identify possible next steps. As a result, staff teach an appropriate, useful and progressive curriculum that supports learners to achieve to the best of their potential. However, a minority of staff do not consistently ensure that all learners have the resources they need to participate in activities in a timely manner. As a result, learners arrive at lessons without their assistive tools, which delays their participation in learning.

Staff use effective strategies that enable learners to recall and apply their learning in practical situations successfully. For example, staff use digital resources well to introduce topics, such as pictures of coins that correspond with numbers. A minority of staff do not allow learners sufficient time for processing a situation or instruction. As a result, not all learners develop the self-regulation skills they need in order to improve their independence.

Learners benefit from a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills outside the college. For example, learners benefit from a partnership with local railway stations, where they display their art in waiting rooms and work on the grounds with staff.

Staff have developed an effective careers programme that supports learners to prepare for work and voluntary activities. Learners learn about the behaviours employers expect, interview skills and how to present themselves. Staff support learners to practise travelling, slowly building up the skills and confidence they need to travel independently and interact with new people.

Leaders do not ensure that staff consistently reinforce appropriate expectations of learners' behaviours. Some learners demonstrate over-familiar behaviours and make inappropriate comments that are not appropriately challenged by staff. Consequently, there is an increased risk of safeguarding incidents when occurrences are not identified, and other learners may be put at risk, or their own learning may be disrupted. Staff do not always reinforce appropriate personal and protective boundaries with clarity and consistency for learners. Some learners do not develop the knowledge they need in order to know how to keep themselves safe when forming new friendships.

Trustees understand their role and responsibilities. They strategically oversee the management and administration of the college. However, trustees do not provide appropriate challenge regarding learners' behaviours and attitudes and the rigour of safeguarding.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have developed an effective culture of protecting and supporting young people across the college. Staff receive frequent safeguarding training to ensure that they keep learners safe. They report concerns promptly, and these are swiftly actioned, including where appropriate contact with relevant agencies. The designated safeguarding lead maintains records of incidents and concerns that staff raise. However, important and pertinent information, such as information from external agencies and the outcome of incidents, is not recorded in the safeguarding report. Consequently, staff are not able to ensure that records are comprehensive and that concerns identified have been resolved, or to track trends.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL have had appropriate training. They implement appropriate safeguarding policies, including a safe recruitment process, to ensure that staff are suitable to work with young people and vulnerable adults.

Although leaders have developed and implemented a 'Prevent' duty action plan, it does not identify fully all the risks in the local community and how to help learners to keep themselves safe from these.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders need to improve governance arrangements so that trustees provide appropriate scrutiny and challenge to leaders and hold them to account for learners' behaviour and attitudes and safeguarding arrangements.
- Leaders need to ensure that all teachers and LSAs promote appropriate behaviours and reinforce healthy relationships, enabling learners to develop the professional boundaries that will help keep them safe at work and in the community.
- Leaders need to ensure that all teachers and LSAs plan learning so that learners are sufficiently supported to process information.

Provider details

Unique reference number	146089
Address	7 Old London Road Patcham Brighton East Sussex BN1 8XR
Contact number	01273 551028
Website	http://downsviewlifeskillscollege.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Vanessa Hickey
Provider type	Independent specialist college
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the executive headteacher, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous monitoring visit 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

Carolyn Brownsea, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Emma Leavey	His Majesty's Inspector
Josie Grainger	Ofsted Inspector

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