

Folkestone Beacon Plus

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider:	Independent specialist college
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Ofsted undertakes to carry out monitoring visits to independent specialist colleges newly funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. 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.

Folkestone Beacon Plus is an independent specialist provider based in the centre of Folkestone, Kent. It provides education for young people with a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities aged 18 to 25 years, all of whom have education, health and care (EHC) plans, and many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Leaders provide learners with individualised programmes to develop their English and mathematics skills and prepare for independence in adult life and sustainable employment. All learners take part in substantial work placements as part of their programmes. At the time of the visit, there were 23 learners studying from entry level to level 2.

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 developed a provision that meets the needs of young people in the local area, providing them with the training and support to successfully prepare for adulthood. They consider the starting points of learners carefully, as well as the barriers they face to employment opportunities in the local economy. They use this information effectively to design programmes that help learners to progress on to positive next steps, such as long-term volunteering, paid work and vocational qualifications.

Leaders and employers work together well to provide learners with valuable opportunities to gain skills for employment in roles that develop their interests and aspirations. Leaders and staff ensure that employers understand the needs of learners and how to support them while at work. Staff work effectively with employers to ensure that learners continue to develop additional skills and increased responsibility while at work. For example, learners working in cafes start by completing small tasks, such as clearing tables, and move on to serving customers.

Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of learners well. They take purposeful, appropriate actions to improve the experience and progress of learners. Leaders use their evaluation of the curriculum to plan key training for staff, such as understanding attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and supporting learners' mental health. As a result, staff use effective strategies to help learners engage in activities and make progress. However, staff have received limited training to develop their pedagogical skills so that they are competent in teaching all areas of the curriculum. For example, tutors would value training to maintain and develop their skills in teaching mathematics.

Leaders have developed suitable arrangements for governance. The board of governors is highly experienced and knowledgeable in its fields and inquisitive about the provision. Although these arrangements are in the early stages, leaders benefit from useful scrutiny and challenge that directly impacts on the quality of the provision. For example, leaders have recently improved the range and quality of work placements so that learners develop transferrable, work-related skills.

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 and tutors have designed a curriculum that helps learners to become more independent in their personal lives and careers. Learners benefit from individualised learning programmes based on their starting points, development needs and the outcomes of their EHC plans. Learners value the work-placement opportunities internally at the café and bakery and externally with local employers. Learners study additional qualifications appropriate to their interests and aspirations, such as food safety and hygiene. As a result, most learners achieve their qualifications, become more independent and gain employment.

Well-qualified and experienced staff create a calm and enjoyable learning environment, where learners engage with learning well. They use a variety of effective teaching techniques, useful feedback and activities to enable learners to apply their learning. As a result, learners can remember more and do more. For example, learners develop new knowledge and skills, which helps them to run the college café and bakery independently.

Although staff track learners' progress effectively in their academic studies in subjects such as English and mathematics, they do not have mechanisms in place to track learners' progress in all elements of the curriculum. As a result, leaders cannot evaluate the overall impact of the curriculum to ensure that they can continue to make improvements.

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

Leaders have created a very strong culture of safeguarding. The appropriately trained designated safeguarding lead (DSL) keeps suitable, secure records and completes thorough individualised risk assessments. The DSL monitors concerns very closely and has clear reporting mechanisms in place to keep students safe.

Leaders carry out appropriate pre-employment checks on all staff, ensuring they are safe to work with young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders ensure that all staff are suitably trained to keep learners safe. However, the DSL does not keep oversight of the timely completion of training so that they are assured all staff and governors are kept up to date about all safeguarding matters.

Learners feel safe when at college and work and know how to stay safe. They know how to report concerns and trust staff to take forward any of their concerns.

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