

Inspection of LINK19 College

Inspection dates:

10 to 12 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Provision for learners with high needs

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Link19 College is a small specialist post-19 college based in Kent. The college works with learners aged 19 to 25 who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Learners follow a programme of extended work experience placements, vocational training, and English and mathematics qualifications. This programme supports learners to develop their knowledge and skills to achieve the outcomes in their education, health and care (EHC) plans and prepare them for their next steps.

At the time of the inspection, 39 learners were attending the college, studying courses from entry level to level 2.

The college does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Learners enjoy coming to the college, where staff know them well. They benefit from a calm environment. Learners benefit from the high expectations of staff, who model good behaviour. As such, almost all learners behave appropriately and have positive attitudes to their learning and work. However, in a small minority of sessions, learners' behaviours are not consistently challenged. For example, while most learners put their hands up, others shout out and take up more time in the class.

Learners develop new confidence and self-belief that they can progress into employment. They value the time they spend in meaningful work placements. They understand well the transferrable skills they develop in the classroom and confidently apply these in the workplace, such as communication skills, teamwork, and leadership.

Learners benefit from an exceptionally well-developed personal development curriculum that helps them to prepare to live meaningful and independent lives. Learners develop a secure understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. For example, staff help learners to identify strategies to manage their mental health.

All learners participate in rich experiences with the support of staff. Learners take active part in their community and learn about opportunities to contribute to the community when they leave the college. For example, learners are involved in a local recycling project, take regular trips to the community to practise their skills and take part in activities such as sport and cooking.

Learners feel safe at the college and at work. They know who to contact should they have any concerns.

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

Leaders have high ambitions for learners to achieve vocational and academic qualifications and quickly develop their employability skills through work placements. However, leaders have not yet realised their ambitions. For example, too few learners achieve their qualifications in English and mathematics or move on swiftly to take on more responsibility in their work placements.

Leaders have recently introduced an assessment to identify learners' starting points in all areas of the curriculum. However, staff do not use this effectively to identify key targets and activities to develop learners' skills incrementally over time. In addition, staff do not track learners' progress towards the outcomes of their EHC plans effectively so that learners develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours in all activities. For example, workplace supervisors and learners do not always know learners' targets. As a result, teachers and workplace supervisors miss opportunities to help learners practise their skills and develop them more quickly.

Leaders have selected and developed an appropriate curriculum that enables learners to quickly experience the world of work and develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours to prepare them for their next steps in work and life. They have designed three pathways to meet learners' individual needs and help them to progress towards the outcomes of their EHC plans. As a result, learners develop practical knowledge and skills well and grow significantly in confidence.

Staff are well qualified and suitably experienced in their roles. They benefit from suitable training to improve the programme, such as counselling courses and working with different specialist providers to share best practice. However, teachers and workplace supervisors have not benefited from training to improve their pedagogical skills. Consequently, staff do not successfully bring together all of the elements of progress that learners make to ensure that they continuously challenge learners to know more and do more.

Teachers present information clearly. They encourage learners to reflect on their previous learning in each session, helping them to remember their learning. They use questioning well to stimulate discussions between learners and assess learners' knowledge and skills. Learners benefit from well-planned activities to practise their skills. For example, learners prepare to visit a supermarket and café in the classroom, identifying how to find the items they wish to buy and how to order something appropriately in the café. They then visit the supermarket and café more independently, developing essential life skills.

Workplace supervisors provide useful guidance and support for learners when they are at their work placements. Learners benefit from support that meets their needs to build their confidence and learn their roles. Workplace supervisors reduce the support over time when learners become more confident and independent. As a result, a small minority of learners have been offered paid work.

Leaders ensure that all learners benefit from useful careers education, information, advice and guidance from the start of their programmes. Learners are supported to explore industries, job roles, and make informed choices about their futures.

Leaders have developed a well-experienced board of directors, which provides useful scrutiny, support and challenge, resulting in the implementation of appropriate actions for improvement. Leaders use effective methods to identify the quality of the provision and have identified appropriate key areas for improvement. For example, leaders have introduced a new tool to enable staff to track learners' progress in all elements of the curriculum. However, it is too early to see the impact of these actions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that the board of directors completes training in safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty as planned.
- Ensure that teachers benefit from opportunities to develop their teaching practice so that learners receive consistently high-quality training.
- Ensure that workplace supervisors receive training to enable them to develop learners' skills towards their targets and track learners' progress effectively.
- Ensure that the information from the initial assessment is utilised to plan individualised targets for learners and track progress effectively through the newly introduced tool.

Provider details

Unique reference number	146040
Address	LINK Centre, Block H Dering Way Gravesend Kent DA12 2DP
Contact number	01474555799
Website	www.link19college.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Martin Francis
Provider type	Independent specialist college
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of college, 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

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His Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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