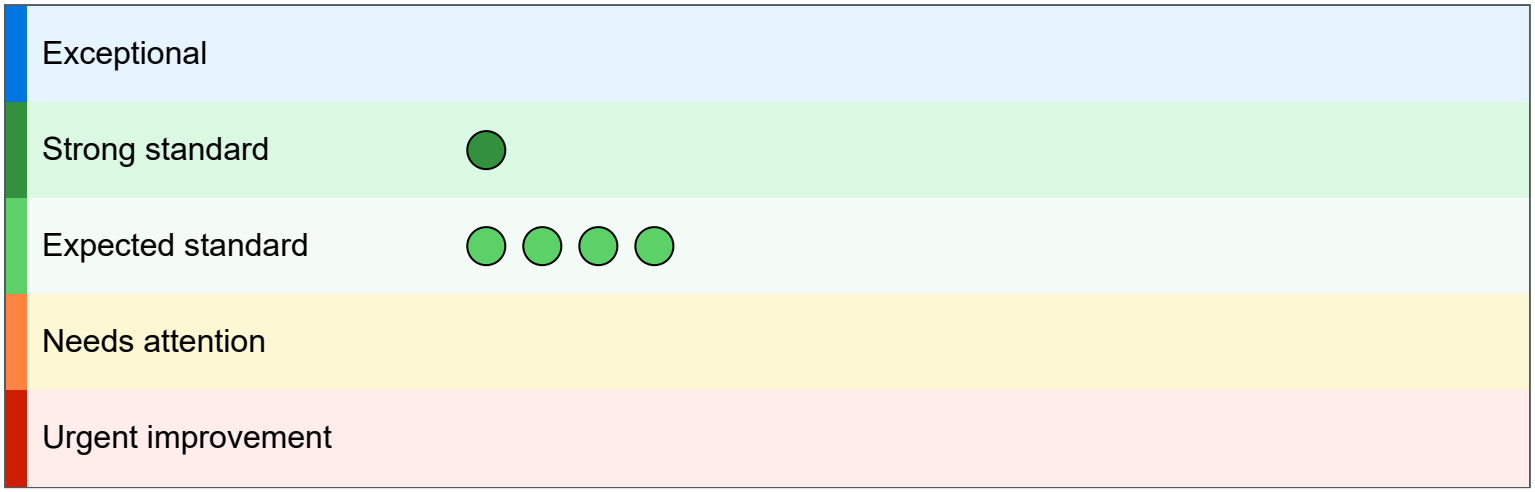
LINK19 College

Address: LINK Centre, Block H, Dering Way, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 2DP

Unique reference number (URN): 146040

Inspection report: 5 May 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, learners are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect providers for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The provider has an open and positive culture of safeguarding.
- Not met: The provider has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

1. Inclusion, and leadership and governance

Strong standard	●
Expected standard	●

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders identify learners' starting points very well. They work closely with stakeholders such as local authorities, parents, foster carers and key workers to identify barriers to learning. They liaise carefully with schools to arrange helpful transition days and build up well-informed baseline assessments. Leaders and staff are highly trained. They put in place thorough and helpful support plans, informed by education, health and care plan targets, which are used and understood by all teaching and support staff.

Leaders have created a culture of inclusion that is embedded throughout the provision. They track the impact of support, discuss it frequently and reduce or adapt it in relation to needs and the progress that learners make. For example, when learners following hospitality pathways become more confident serving customers, staff gradually reduce the close supervision, so learners do not become over-dependent.

Staff use a range of highly effective support strategies that make sure that barriers to learning are reduced swiftly and consistently. They work very well with external professionals to ensure that strategies and use of equipment such as wobble cushions and foot rollers are embedded in classroom practice.

Expected standard ●

Leadership and governance

Expected standard ●

Leaders have a clear mission and vision to provide high-quality support for learners aged 19 to 25 years who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They aim to enable learners to meet their education, health and care (EHC) plan outcomes and prepare them for their next steps. They typically do this highly effectively. Leaders, and the board of directors who provide governance, understand the strengths and areas for development of the provision well. Where they identify weaknesses, they take actions that mostly lead to improvements. For example, they have strengthened the processes for monitoring learners' progress, so they now more quickly identify learners who are falling behind and put in place successful interventions.

Leaders work closely with employers, parents, stakeholder groups and professionals to make sure that learners are well supported and can thrive at the college. They work with

staff in local schools and other settings to create transition plans so that effective support can be put in place from the start. They liaise with local authorities to organise travel arrangements and review EHC plans. They work with social workers and foster parents to meet the needs of the small number of children in care at the setting.

Staff feel valued and respected by leaders at the college. Leaders are considerate of their workload and wellbeing and promote a healthy work-life balance through co-teaching arrangements and the provision of protected time for planning and assessment. Staff value highly the carefully tailored programmes of professional development, which have a positive impact on their practice.

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2. Provision for learners with high needs

Expected standard

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Learners, most of whom experience substantial barriers to learning, make significant progress towards independence and employability during their time at the college. They develop highly relevant English, mathematical and digital skills and achieve the outcomes in their education, health and care plans. They communicate confidently with customers in the workplace. They learn to handle money and give change. They build the digital literacy skills they need to use banking apps and online bus timetables.

Almost all learners achieve their vocational qualifications. Leaders are ambitious to provide learners with the opportunity to gain functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics to increase employability, but acknowledge that too few learners currently achieve these qualifications.

Learners feel confident about their next steps. They gain the confidence to travel independently, and they develop friendships and take on more responsibility. Most move on to positive destinations after college, including in social care, further education, voluntary work and, in a small number of cases, paid employment.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of their curriculum because of their diligent approach to quality assurance. Where they identify areas for improvement, such as the need to expand employer engagement in work placements, they quickly take effective actions.

Leaders have developed well-tailored curriculums with clear, achievable and realistic outcomes, related to learners' education, health and care plans and to their interests, abilities and aspirations. Staff sequence and interweave the vocational, academic and preparation for adulthood curriculums skilfully, so that learners develop, practise and apply their knowledge in varied situations. The blend of time spent each week between classroom learning and work placement is particularly effective.

Leaders make sure that learners can access the provision smoothly. They make supportive adjustments for those who need them. They integrate therapies into the provision effectively. Specially trained teachers give clear explanations and break instructions down so learners understand. They select interesting and engaging activities which help learners to develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours and consolidate their learning. In enterprise classes, learners apply creativity, reading and mathematics skills to make products for fundraising events.

Staff provide useful feedback on practical work, which helps learners to strive to do more and complete their work to a very high standard. Too often, however, feedback on written work is largely positive and lacks constructive comment to inform learners how to improve.

Participation and development **Expected standard**

Leaders have developed a curriculum which helps learners build their confidence, resilience and personal skills well. Learners generally have a good understanding of how to stay physically and mentally well as a result.

Learners are very motivated and their attendance is consistently high. Staff have high expectations of learners' behaviour, and learners respond to this well. Learners are respectful and polite to staff and peers. They take pride in their work and meet requests with enthusiasm. They grow in confidence and in their ability to become more independent because of what they learn at college.

Learners feel safe at college and in placement. They are confident to report any concerns to staff or seek support if they do not. They do not tolerate bullying or harassment. Learners speak clearly and confidently about respect and tolerance and describe how they would protect each other from harm.

Staff prepare learners well for their next steps. Many become independent travellers, substantially reducing reliance on parents and carers. Learners undertake placements in settings such as cafes, retail stores or animal shelters that align with their career aims and interests. Staff support those seeking work diligently. However, careers guidance is too often limited to narrow outcomes, and few learners successfully gain paid employment.

What it's like to be a learner and/or an apprentice at this provider

Learners benefit from the warm, welcoming and supportive culture leaders have created at the college. Consequently, learners with high needs quickly form a deep sense of belonging. They develop new skills and behaviours as they grow in confidence and flourish. They form

new friendship groups and become more independent and capable of self-regulation because of their time here. They are typically supported highly effectively to fulfil their potential.

Learners benefit from carefully planned support which helps them to engage in college life and build incrementally the skills and independence that they need. They become more resilient. They learn independent living skills, such as washing clothes, ironing and making beds, in safe and supported environments. They learn to prepare and serve food in the college cafe and retail shop before moving on to external placements in commercial restaurants or large retail stores, where they thrive.

Learners enjoy college and feel safe. They are taught about staying safe online by identifying scams and fake news and reviewing profiles. Teachers tailor learning effectively so learners build their understanding about the risks of radicalisation and how to recognise dangers from people identifying themselves as friends or people with common interests. Most learners have a good understanding about healthy relationships and can discuss age-appropriate topics such as consent and relationships with maturity and confidence.

Learners benefit from a wide range of community and enrichment activities, which they value highly. They participate very well in activities such as the annual 3-day residential trip, where they enjoyed camping, climbing and bushcraft activities. They make craft products, such as keyrings, dog treats and baked goods, to sell at fundraising fairs. Learners prepared and served food at a black-tie dinner for local dignitaries. They participate in ‘farm to fork’ activities at the allotment and fitness days at a local sports centre. Learners are rightly very proud of their achievements at these events.

Next steps

- Leaders should improve the consistency of written feedback so that learners understand what they need to do to improve.
- Leaders should improve the achievement rates on functional skills English and mathematics courses, where too few learners currently pass.
- Leaders should continue to strengthen the careers guidance they provide so learners develop a better understanding of potential future pathways and more progress into work.

About this inspection

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty’s Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with senior leaders, members of the board of directors, teachers, staff, learners, parents and carers, employers, local authorities and other stakeholder group representatives during the inspection.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were 37 learners enrolled. They were all 19 years of age or older. All learners were in receipt of high needs funding. They all had an education, health and care plan in place, and most also had healthcare plans.

Headteacher: Martin Francis

Lead inspector:
Viki Faulkner, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Kay Hedges, Ofsted Inspector
Emma Leavey, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 5 May 2026

Number of learners

Total learners

37

Provision for learners with high needs

37

Percentage of learning aims successfully achieved

Adult learning programmes

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	46	87	Below
2024/25	46	87	Below
2023/24	40	87	Below
2023/24	40	87	Below
2022/23	7	87	Below
2022/23	7	87	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional 🔵

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other providers can learn from it.

Strong standard 🟢

The provider reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard 🟢

The provider is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention 🟠

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement 🔴

The provider needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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