

# Lifeworks College

Monitoring visit report

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<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Penny Fawcus, Her Majesty's Inspector
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<b>Type of provider:</b>	Independent specialist college
<b>Address:</b>	Lescaze Shinners Bridge Dartington Devon TQ9 6JD

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

From autumn 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to independent specialist colleges newly Education and Skills Funding Agency funded from August 2018 onwards. 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.

Lifeworks College is an independent specialist college based in Dartington, Devon. It offers study programmes for learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). At the time of the visit, there were 18 learners aged between 17 and 23 years studying at the college. Most learners have moderate or specific learning difficulties. All learners have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).

The impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgements below.

### 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**

Managers have developed a clear rationale for the curriculum. They aim to develop learners' skills to become independent, gain employment and take part in community activities. Managers have planned a curriculum which helps to develop learners' literacy, numeracy and digital skills, for example using and calculating money, improving handwriting and reading travel timetables. Most learners gain meaningful qualifications at a higher level than their prior attainment to support their next steps. Managers tailor the curriculum effectively for each learner by selecting additional vocational subjects to support them to achieve their individual goals.

Managers have developed very effective working relationships with local employers to provide constructive work experience for learners. The placements help learners to find work in their local communities after college. For example, learners who live in rural communities benefit from work experience on farms.

Managers work and communicate effectively with learners' families on a day-to-day basis. They use their extensive network of partners to offer specialist advice and guidance to families and learners. For example, they help families to access information about accommodation options to support independent living. Managers

work in partnership with families, the learner and the local authority to develop a new and relevant EHC plan once the learner has settled into the college. Families rightly feel very well supported by the college.

Leaders have established a board of trustees, with specialist link trustees who visit lessons in the college to speak to staff and learners. Trustees have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement for the college.

Leaders have not implemented a staffing structure that supports continual improvements to the quality of education and training. For example, the operational manager does not receive sufficient support to meet the significant challenges resulting from the pandemic, such as finding new work placements and making changes to the curriculum.

**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**

Staff plan effective learning programmes that enable learners to gain employment and achieve their personal goals. Learners benefit from impartial careers advice, which helps them to match their work placement opportunities directly to their interests and abilities. Learners' experience of different work placements helps them to understand their options and make informed plans for their next steps after college.

Learners improve their independent working skills and social behaviours during their work placements and community activities. Learners value the new skills they are learning and understand how these skills will support them to achieve their goals. For example, they learn how to travel more independently and cook their own meals.

Staff design programmes that meet learners' highly individual and complex needs. Learners enjoy and want to attend college. Families see rapid improvements in learners' self-confidence, communication skills and behaviours. For example, they learn how not to interrupt others.

Staff do not use their assessment of learners' progress overtime to identify and tackle any gaps in their learning. Staff set targets for learners that are not sufficiently specific or well sequenced to ensure learners continually build on their skills and knowledge. Consequently, learners do not understand what they need to do to develop their skills further.

Staff are well qualified and experienced in teaching and supporting learners with SEND. Staff meet regularly to discuss learners' needs and receive relevant professional training, such as autism spectrum disorder awareness and job coaching.

Managers ensure that staff fully understand learners' specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities and use the most appropriate strategies to help them learn.

Staff do not liaise well enough with employers on how best to support their learners' specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff do not involve employers in planning work placements and do not share information about the knowledge, skills and behaviours learners are aiming to acquire. Consequently, employers have to rely on learners' support assistants to support the learner and their learning in the workplace.

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

Learners feel safe and have a good understanding of who to go to in the college if they have any concerns. Managers have also arranged for additional support from independent advocates so learners can share their views and raise any issues.

Staff provide helpful training for learners and families about e-safety. Learners who can access the internet are aware of some of the dangers of being online.

Managers provide valuable safeguarding information and training to employers. They ensure employers have a good understanding of their safeguarding requirements. Employers know who to contact at the college if they have any concerns. Staff carry out thorough workplace risk assessments for every learner, which includes clear guidance on how to best manage potential risks. Learners' support assistants help employers to manage these risks. Consequently, employers are very conscious of the potential risks that individual learners may be exposed to in their workplaces. Families and employers rightly feel that learners work in a safe environment.

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