

Bromley Mencap

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector:	Jon Bowman, His Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent specialist college
Address:	Station Road Bromley BR1 3LP

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.

Bromley Mencap is an independent specialist college based in Bromley. The college provides education and training for young people aged 16 to 25 who have moderate special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Bromley Mencap began teaching learners in September 2023. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 17 learners who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and high needs.

Learners attend the college three days each week and study a two-year curriculum to develop their English, mathematics, and their employability and independent living skills. Learners study a qualification in skills for independence and employability. Other short qualifications are available to learners in topics such as food hygiene, first aid and health and safety at work. The curriculum aims to prepare them for apprenticeships, supported internships, employment, or further learning.

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 and managers have developed a curriculum in response to local demands for more post-16 education provision for young people with moderate learning difficulties. They have designed the curriculum with a clear aim to teach young people the essential knowledge and skills they need to gain employment and live more independently.

Leaders and managers make sure that they have sufficient capacity to deliver the provision. They have put together a small team of highly committed staff, led by a qualified teacher, who have suitable experience of young people with SEND. They have sensibly secured external expertise to help develop the provision. For example, they have specialist support from the local authority who provides support, advice and guidance on the programme, including on, for example, the suitability of resources.

Leaders and managers provide suitable support to tutors to develop their teaching skills. They use feedback from learning walks and observations of teaching and learning so that tutors develop their teaching skills effectively. Leaders and managers understand well the strengths and areas for development of teaching. They support tutors well to participate in accredited training to improve their practice.

Leaders provide learners with a range of opportunities to develop their English and mathematics skills throughout their curriculum. For example, learners learn how to budget and manage their money effectively. However, leaders and tutors do not sufficiently identify what English and mathematics skills learners already have. Leaders recognise that they need to improve the English and mathematics curriculum so that learners develop better the skills they need for work and everyday life.

Senior leaders have reasonable oversight of the provision through the existing board of trustees. They receive reports on the quality of education that includes information such as attendance and achievement. These present an accurate picture of many of the strengths and areas for improvement of the provision. However, senior leaders recognise that to enhance the scrutiny of the provision they need to secure greater expertise and knowledge of post-16 SEND education to help further develop 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

Leaders, managers, and staff know the learners well. They generate a warm sense of belonging and community at the college. Learners enjoy attending and show exemplary behaviour on site. They attend well and all achieve their main qualification. Parents and careers confirm how quickly their young person grows in confidence and independence as they develop new skills and knowledge at the college.

As part of the curriculum, leaders and tutors provide a range of opportunities for learners to develop essential skills and knowledge they need for work and to live more independently. This includes work-related learning, work experience, travel training, digital skills and cooking. Alongside this, learners participate in trips out in the community to go shopping and to the theatre. This provides learners with a sound foundation to make good progress. External speakers further enhance the curriculum. However, leaders and managers do not sufficiently plan the curriculum with the specific long-term vocational aspirations of all learners in mind. Managers are aware of this and have plans in place to adapt the curriculum, so it better meets the individual goals of all learners.

Leaders and managers use a suitable range of assessments to understand what learners know and can do at the start of their programme. They use information from learners' EHC plans, their assessment of learners at the start of the course, their own observations, and those of parents, carers, and learners. Tutors use this information well to adapt their teaching to meet learners' individual needs in classes. Tutors monitor learners' progress closely, but this is not always well recorded. This means it is not clear to see the progress learners make.

Tutors use a range of suitable strategies to make sure that learners remember what they are taught. Tutors reinforce knowledge in different subjects effectively. For example, they link shopping in life skills lessons to what tutors teach learners in mathematics about how to plan a budget to manage their money. They break information down into small chunks to help learners understand and complete learning activities and tasks. Tutors use online quizzes well to check learners' understanding. In a few instances tutors use language that is too complicated or unfamiliar for learners to understand.

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

Leaders, managers, and staff make sure that there is a positive safeguarding culture at the college. They are suitably experienced and trained to safeguard learners. Learners feel safe. They trust staff and are confident to raise any concerns they have about their safety or welfare with them. Staff and managers are vigilant and respond effectively where there are safeguarding concerns to keep learners safe.

Leaders and managers have put in place suitable policies and procedures for staff to follow to safeguard learners. These include a suitable risk assessment of the risks to learners associated with radicalisation and extremism. Senior leaders have good oversight and understanding of safeguarding incidents because managers maintain an up-to-date log of incidents and actions.

Managers have put in place a curriculum to teach learners how to keep themselves safe. This features topics such as sexual health and how to stay safe online. However, managers do not make sure that learners develop a sufficient understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

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