

Lifeworks College

Independent Specialist College



Inspection dates	23–25 February 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for students	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Students make good progress in improving their communication and independence skills because teaching is good and the emphasis on preparing for adult life is very strong.
- The wide-ranging and diverse curriculum gives students good opportunities to experience new activities and helps them to make choices about their futures.
- Students leaving college make good progress into voluntary or paid employment and supported living arrangements.
- Students quickly develop good employability skills as a result of the very good work experience programme, which makes very effective use of local employers and job coaches and takes account of individual needs and preferences.
- Trustees know their organisation well; they have a good practical plan to develop the college, building on the successes achieved so far.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- In a small minority of cases, teachers do not use the information available to them to identify what students can or cannot at the start of their courses, nor do they record effectively the significant successes achieved by students as they progress towards their learning goals.
- Managers do not fully identify through self-assessment the impact of the college's work on the lives of its students, nor do they fully involve all relevant groups or individuals in the self-assessment process.
- A small minority of risk assessments of activities and of individual students are not sufficiently rigorous or reviewed often enough; consequently, some key information is not up to date and changes are not recorded on individual students' records.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Lifeworks College was launched in 2011 for young people in the South Devon area for those whose particular needs local provision was not suitable. Initially, the college was funded by Lifeworks Charity and then by the fees charged to the local authority.
- Lifeworks College now takes students from all of Devon, Torbay and Cornwall. Students either live in adult foster care, residential homes or with their parents. Lifeworks also offers short- and long-term respite care for children and young people up to the age of 20, and runs a home for young adults with complex learning disabilities.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Make better use of and simplify the information about students' starting points and the progress they make so that:
 - all relevant staff, job coaches and employers contribute to the reviewing and setting of short-term targets and long-term goals
 - all staff are clear about their role in helping students achieve their learning goals
 - students and their parents are aware of how college activities prepare them for their next stage.
- Improve self-assessment arrangements and the observations of teaching and learning so that:
 - managers identify the full impact of the work of the college on the lives of students
 - information from the self-assessment process is used to set further specific and measurable improvement targets for the college and individual staff.
- Ensure that all risk assessments are reviewed regularly, making sure that:
 - they reflect the changing needs of students
 - they are linked to appropriate learning goals
 - that information recorded is up-to-date and relevant
 - the need for personal protective clothing is included where necessary.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- All staff have high expectations of students and reinforce high standards across the college. Students respond well to being treated as adults; this improves their behaviour and enables them to take greater responsibility for their actions, where possible. The out-of-college activities in work placements and the wider community are particularly effective in reinforcing the skills necessary for adult life.
- The range of provision offered is good. The curriculum is broad, highly personalised and has a strong emphasis on real work experience from the start of all students' programmes. Consequently, young people with complex and significant special educational needs that cannot be met by other local provision are able to continue in education and stay in the parental, foster or residential home.
- Managers work effectively with staff to agree development targets and action points to help them improve their skills. Extensive training in areas such as how to manage challenging behaviour, e-safety, first aid and food hygiene enables staff to improve their confidence, competence and knowledge.
- Strong collaboration with the National Careers Service and a local job coach provider makes a very good contribution to the employability curriculum, helping students to make informed choices about future work options and providing a well-structured approach to developing good employability skills.
- Lifeworks College produced its first self-assessment report in January 2016. In the report, managers identify many positive aspects of the provision and also some aspects where improvements are required. However, they do not identify the impact of the work of the college on the lives of students, and the report lacks sufficient detail to substantiate reliable judgements about the quality of the provision. None of the wider staff group, parents or others involved in the provision were formally included in the self-assessment process.
- The recently introduced observations of the effectiveness of teaching and learning require further improvement. The chief executive and teacher in charge have started to observe sessions, and their records of observations identify the key strengths and areas for development. However, in a minority of judgements, they do not clearly identify the impact of learning on the students, the progress they make over time or the standards they achieve. Plans to undertake more structured 'learning walks' enabling observers to focus on particular themes, such as development of communication, employability or independence skills are at an early stage of development.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - The trustees and chief executive have a strong vision and plan for the future of the college. The initial funding of the college through charity funding, followed by local authorities commissioning places for students, resulted in viable and sustainable provision that is responsive and meets the specific educational needs of some young people in Devon and the surrounding area.
 - Trustees have a clear understanding of their strategic role in the management of the college and in supporting and challenging the leadership team. Board members have good experience and expertise and strengthen the board's ability to scrutinise the work of the college. Their understanding of the strengths of the provision and where further improvements are required is good.
 - The current board of trustees has no female members; trustees are actively seeking to improve the gender balance but had been unsuccessful at the time of inspection.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Arrangements for safeguarding are appropriate and strongly focused on the needs of the students. All staff have a thorough understanding of the potential risks to students and take the necessary measures to ensure that they are safe. Records of checks on staff, including criminal records checks, are generally up to date and accurate.
 - Staff handle safeguarding incidents professionally and sensitively. Minor incidents or concerns are recorded in appropriate detail, with suitable actions identified and completed.
 - Parents have a high level of confidence in how Lifeworks College handles safeguarding incidents. They have frequent and regular contact with the college's staff; where concerns are raised by students or parents, staff take quick and appropriate action.
 - Staff work hard to ensure that students are kept safe and a strong culture of safeguarding exists. Policies on safeguarding are appropriate and are regularly reviewed.
 - Staff have regular training on safeguarding. Staff training on the 'Prevent' duty is planned but staff have not yet received it. Parents have confidence in how the college handles safeguarding incidents and where they occur the concerns and the action taken are clearly recorded.

- In a small minority of cases, staff do not undertake risk assessments rigorously or frequently enough to capture adequately students' changing circumstances. Similarly, on a small number of occasions the need for personal protective equipment such as protective glasses and gloves is not recorded.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The college provides a broad curriculum and programmes of study contribute well to helping students progress to employment and independent living. Staff have high aspirations for students and most teaching challenges students to make progress.
- Staff listen to and observe the students carefully, and provide learning programmes that are individually designed to meet students' needs. Good support, including specialist support, such as one-to-one coaching for work placements and careers advice, is provided; as a result, students are well motivated and make good progress. Students value the caring attitudes of the staff and appreciate the help they receive.
- Practical teaching methods and good-quality resources inspire and enable students to develop skills and deepen their understanding of how things work. Staff are skilled at standing back and enabling students to achieve tasks for themselves. Students take positive steps towards independence through learning cooking, managing their money and developing skills for travel on public transport.
- Teaching and learning are adapted well to students' individual needs. Staff develop students' English, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills well throughout their lessons, and students make good progress. Staff work well as a team to provide interesting activities and develop good social skills. They make activities fun and students enjoy their time at the college.
- Staff are well trained and experienced. They know the students well and demonstrate patience and care while promoting independence. Staff provide a calm atmosphere that helps students concentrate and learn. Students improve their literacy and numeracy well and achieve qualifications in food hygiene and hospitality. Students are well motivated and keen to achieve qualifications and awards.
- Staff assess students' needs quickly, build on previous assessments and achievements and provide effective support and encouragement. However, despite the large amount of documentation and information available, records of assessment do not cover all relevant aspects of students' lives. As the number of students at the college is small, much discussion takes place about students' progress, but staff do not record progress or feedback well, so that students are not always clear what progress they are making and what they need to do to improve further.
- Students benefit from good-quality work placements with a range of employers. Care is taken to ensure that a good match exists between the students' needs and what the work placements can offer. However, staff do not set clear learning goals for work placement activities, and although the college and students receive verbal feedback on achievements, employers do not provide any written records after work placements to help with future plans.
- Teaching and activities, especially those that take place outdoors, promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Staff promote healthy lifestyles well; students enjoy trips to the gym and volunteering on the Dartington Estate. While leaders create a positive environment and students are treated well, staff do not promote awareness of diversity well enough to prepare students for life in modern Britain.
- Communication with parents is good and they are involved well in planning students' development. Staff and a few parents who are confident with using information technology have started to use an online journal to show how Lifeworks College records, assesses and celebrates achievements.
- Students feel safe during activities, and staff ensure that health and safety rules are followed in the kitchen and during outdoor activities; as a result, students know how to take good care of themselves and others.
- Students receive a good level of verbal feedback and reflect on their own learning well. However, staff do not evaluate and record learning and development effectively in lessons or in work placements, so that students are not always clear about what they have done well and what they need to do to progress further.
- Staff ensure that each student has individual targets that they understand; however, they set targets which are not well considered or sufficiently specific, and do not use them effectively to plan teaching and learning. In too many cases, targets and the actions necessary to achieve them do not focus on the areas that will have the biggest impact and make the most difference to students. For example, hardly any targets or actions identified the behavioural, communication or academic obstacles faced by students that could slow their progress and stop them achieving their full potential.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

- As students gain skills and become more independent, they gain confidence and become more self-assured. Students have very good access to good-quality work placements and work experience, where they develop significant employability skills and become valued members of the workforce. Visiting staff provide close one-to-one support at the start of placements, and this support is slowly reduced as students become more confident. Students value their work placements, enjoy their new responsibilities, develop positive attitudes towards work and engage well with other staff and members of the public.
- The good contribution from the specialist careers advice and guidance worker builds on students' experiences in the workplace, helping them to make informed choices about their next stage and developing their confidence when they attend interviews.
- Staff promote healthy eating and the college is in the process of working towards achieving a healthy college award. Students learn about healthy eating and they make healthy food and drink choices. They work hard at the gym, keep fit and develop healthy lifestyles. They also gain good knowledge about personal hygiene and they learn hygiene rules for the preparation of food so that they know how to look after themselves well. By studying animal life and undertaking conservation activities in a local country park and on the nearby estate, students develop good respect for nature and the environment.
- Students improve their speaking and listening skills through good-quality communication with staff. Staff provide a good balance of a peaceful learning environment enlivened with stimulating conversation about learning activities. In one example, students benefited from a lively discussion about the pros and cons of using different ingredients in cooking.
- Staff know the students well and are sensitive to their needs. They create a calm atmosphere and are vigilant to ensure that any difficult situations between students do not escalate.
- Students feel safe, know how to stay safe online and whom to contact if they have concerns. The students contribute well to the positive learning environment, participate well in activities and disruptions are kept to a minimum.
- The behaviour management of students on the autistic spectrum is good, so that most students behave well and improve their ability to manage their feelings and behaviour well during the college day. Students respond quickly to requests from staff and the college promotes high standards in behaviour and politeness. Students show respect to one another and the staff. Parents notice improvements in behaviour, social skills and in what the young people can achieve.

Outcomes for students are good

- Lifeworks College prepares students well for their next stages. In 2014/15, over half of the students progressed to semi-independent living, and a minority moved in to appropriate full-time care. All leavers that were able to gained either voluntary or paid employment; the remainder was not able to sustain unsupported work due to the level or complexity of their disability.
- The majority of students make good or very good progress compared with when they join the college, particularly in the areas of developing confidence, personal skills and employability. In a small minority of cases, the assessments that took place before students joined the course or when they started failed to identify clearly their knowledge, skills and levels of independence. Consequently, managers are not able to measure fully the value that the college experience adds for these students.
- The achievement of qualifications is good. The good range of qualifications achieved by students demonstrates good progress in English, mathematics, ICT, life skills, employability and food safety. Students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and gain awards in understanding and caring for the environment.
- The majority of students arrive at college with little experience or practice as living as an adult, and often with low expectations about what they are capable of. Very quickly, Lifeworks College challenges these expectations, broadening their horizons and developing the skills necessary to become a successful adult. For example, all students sign in and out when entering the college, take responsibility for preparing their own lunches and display high standards in the workplace.
- From an early stage in their time at college, students develop a very wide range of good employability skills in the high-quality work placements provided. In particular, students working at a local cinema and in supermarkets develop good customer service skills, are able to talk to unfamiliar adults appropriately and respond to questions in a helpful and courteous manner. Students on work experience in the local mare and foal sanctuary work with animals in a safe and professional way. Other students improve their ability to follow instructions and complete tasks.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of students	19+
Approximate number of all students over the previous full contract year	6
CEO	Richard Hanlon
Website address	www.lifeworks-uk.org

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of students (excluding apprenticeships)	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of students aged 14–16	N/A							
Funding received from	Local authorities							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Nigel Evans, lead inspector

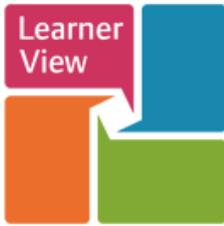
Penny Mathers

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the teacher in charge, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and telephone calls to gather the views of students, parents and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the college.

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