

Great Oak Charitable Trust T/A Great Oaks College

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector:	Joanna Walters, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent specialist college
Address:	Gresham Road Hounslow TW3 4BX

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.

Great Oaks College is based in the London Borough of Hounslow and was established in 2018. Great Oaks College is a specialist post-19 provision in West London for learners with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The college is co-located on the same site as Oaklands School. Learners benefit from well-equipped classrooms and outdoor spaces. Other facilities include a hydrotherapy pool, swimming pool, gym and sports hall.

Learners follow programmes in either the sensory, life skills or vocational pathways. Each pathway prepares learners to lead meaningful adult lives, and increase their independence and employment opportunities. Therapies, such as physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy, are an important element of each curriculum pathway.

At the time of the visit, there were 68 learners aged 19–25 with moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), including learners with autism spectrum disorder.

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? Significant progress

Leaders and managers have clear rationales and ambitious programmes for learners within three curriculum pathways. Tutors work highly effectively with learners, parents, carers and therapists to write individual curriculum plans to ensure that each learner's curriculum is tailored towards their aspirations and next steps towards adult life. Learners complete formal qualifications as part of their curriculum and

work towards achieving their education, health and care (EHC) plan outcomes. As a result, learners make very good progress towards their goals.

Leaders work very effectively with representatives from the local authority to ensure that the curriculum they offer is the right one, and that learners have a successful transition to the college. Leaders liaise with the staff from the local authority to ensure that the pathways they teach complement and integrate well with the curriculum offered at other providers.

Leaders and staff have considered very carefully the curriculum for each pathway. For example, they have designed the sensory pathway with care so that learners with PMLD develop their communication, social skills and interests. On the life skills pathway, learners develop essential skills and knowledge so they are more independent with everyday life skills. These include daily self-care routines, cooking, knowing their rights as an adult and developing their hobbies and interests.

Leaders and managers develop excellent relationships with local employers to offer work experience opportunities in sectors such as hospitality and horticulture. They work closely with employers to enhance their awareness of the needs of their learners. Learners value the experiences they have. As a result, a few learners have successfully gained paid, meaningful part-time employment.

Staff are well qualified and experienced to work with young people with SEND. Staff benefit from training opportunities that enhance their skills. For example, therapists routinely visit classes to model therapy techniques on learners so that staff are competent with techniques.

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? **Significant progress**

Tutors use learners' EHC plans and outcomes extremely well to build a highly individual programme. They focus well on helping learners to gain confidence in social and employment skills. For example, in life skills courses, tutors teach learners how to make choices about what food to eat and what clothes to wear. Learners learn how to keep physically and mentally healthy and understand when to say 'no' and 'stop'. As a result, learners progress very well with their studies.

Tutors, learning support staff and therapists accurately record learners' progress and achievement towards their programme goals. Tutors review and assess learners' individual education plans on a termly basis. They ensure that learning goals reflect accurately the progress learners make in achieving their targets. Leaders and managers have a precise overview of the progress learners make.

Staff understand the individual needs of learners extremely well and as a result, they plan and teach the curriculum effectively. Therapists work in a highly collaborative way with tutors and learning support assistants so they can support learners to use their communication devices in lessons.

Tutors on vocational programmes equip learners with the essential skills they need to gain valuable work experience and paid employment. Learners benefit from the support of a job coach, who provides careers advice and supports them into enjoyable work opportunities, where they develop their social and employment skills.

Tutors make lessons exciting and engaging to encourage participation from learners. For example, tutors play music to learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities to encourage them to communicate their like or dislike of songs.

Parents told inspectors that they see a positive difference in their young person, such as being more alert, initiating communication and engaging with their environment. Learners very much enjoy their time at college and are well supported by staff.

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

Leaders and managers have developed a very strong culture of safeguarding at the college. Staff create a highly inclusive, safe and calm environment for learners. Staff use the policies and procedures that are in place to ensure that learners are kept safe, have equal opportunities and are not deprived of their individual liberty. Staff have high levels of respect and care for learners.

Leaders have developed a bespoke curriculum focused on teaching learners how to lead safe and healthy lives. Topics include keeping safe, personal care, assertiveness, relationships and drugs. For example, male learners are taught to use cubicles when using public conveniences in order to keep themselves safe.

Leaders develop effective relationships with relevant external partners to gain support with safeguarding and 'Prevent' issues. For example, leaders train staff how to recognise the signs of learners that could be in danger of exploitation and disability hate crime.

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