

Inspection of Great Oaks Charitable Trust T/A Great Oaks College

Inspection dates: 19 to 21 April 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Great Oaks Charitable Trust T/A Great Oaks College (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 for learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The college is co-located on the same site as Oaklands School.

Learners may choose to complete two, two-year courses within one of three pathways: Engagement for Life, Life and Living, and Vocational. Each pathway aims to prepare learners for independent living and/or employment. Learners have opportunities to study formal qualifications. Therapies, such as physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and a therapy dog, are integral to each pathway. Learners who have complex medical needs receive support from nurses and highly trained staff at the college.

At the time of inspection, there were 98 learners aged 19–25 with moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), including learners with autism spectrum disorder. All learners have an education and health care (EHC) plan and have high needs.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners thrive in a college environment that is very inclusive, welcoming and has excellent resources. Staff and learners have very high levels of respect for each other. Learners value the support they receive from kind and caring staff.

Learners very much enjoy their time at college. They particularly like taking part in the exciting weekly activities of their choice. These include swimming, yoga, arts, crafts, basketball, visits to art galleries and silent discos.

Learners' behaviour is exemplary. This is because skilled staff understand their needs extremely well. Staff use very effective strategies such as visual and verbal prompts that ensures learners share what they want, and communicate their views and opinions. Learners significantly develop in confidence and improve their communication during their time at college. The vast majority of learners achieve their learning goals and move to meaningful destinations after college. This includes community activities, supported living, employment or further study.

Teachers are highly skilled at helping learners to know about and understand each other's differences. Learners appreciate how their peers communicate, or that they have different faiths. Teachers integrate aspects of learners' personal lives sensitively and appropriately into their lessons. For example, they teach about religious festivals such as Diwali by asking learners to contribute their understanding and experience.

When learners wish to discuss aspects of sexual identity and sexuality, staff respond sensitively and appropriately. They give thoughtful advice and guidance that includes support for learners from external services.

Learners feel safe at college. Teachers skilfully teach learners very relevant topics on how to keep themselves safe in college, at work and in the community. For example, learners have secure knowledge about consent, healthy relationships, digital safety, safety in the community and road safety.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and managers have high expectations of, and are extremely ambitious for learners. Leaders have a clear and very effective vision for learners to develop the valuable and essential knowledge and skills that they need, to be as independent in their lives as they can be.

Staff are well qualified and experienced to teach and support learners who have complex needs. Leaders provide an extensive training and development programme for staff which includes SEND-related topics. These include how to support learners who have Autism, moving and handling learners and behaviour management. As a result, learners benefit from exceptional quality teaching and support.

Teachers use learners' EHC plan outcomes very well to plan and teach a well-structured curriculum. Learners study a bespoke curriculum that includes communication, including the use of assistive technologies, sensory development, meal preparation, English and mathematics, community visits, travel training and enrichment.

Teachers and support staff review learning goals frequently and set ambitious targets to monitor the very good progress that learners make. As a result, learners develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours over time and achieve their learning goals. For example, learners on the life and living pathway learn essential skills for life, such as how to prepare a meal and iron their clothes. Learners on Engagement for Life pathway rapidly develop excellent communication skills to express their needs and views with others, using a range of assistive technologies.

Teachers on the Vocational pathway work highly effectively with local employers to set up excellent work placements for learners. For example, learners initially participate in a wide choice of short work experiences in retail, horticulture and catering. They learn very useful skills for work such as customer service, food hygiene and stock taking. When learners develop more complex skills, they participate in a placement based on their area of interest for an extended period of time. As a result, a high proportion of Vocational pathway learners gain paid employment or voluntary work.

Teachers are ambitious for learners to achieve relevant Vocational qualifications that help them find jobs or go on to further education. For example, where appropriate, learners study formal qualifications in English, mathematics, food hygiene and moving and handling. A high proportion of learners achieve their learning goals and qualifications.

Leaders ensure that therapeutic provision supports learners' progress very well. Speech and language, occupational and physiotherapists work in a very collaborative way to provide guidance to teaching and support staff. This ensures therapies are an integral part of a learner's curriculum and development plan. Learners make excellent progress towards achieving their therapy goals.

Staff liaise very effectively with parents and carers. They provide daily communication books that explain the activities learners engage with during the day. Parents and carers highly value the communication they receive from staff. They particularly appreciate the frequent feedback they receive from staff, including therapists, about the progress their young person makes. The regular communication enables parents and carers to support their young person to apply their new knowledge and skills at home.

Teachers prepare learners thoroughly for their next steps after college. Teachers plan the curriculum from the outset to prepare learners and their families for adulthood. Learners benefit from very helpful careers and employability support from staff. For example, learners on the Vocational pathway meet with employers and get useful interview skills training. They learn about how to dress appropriately

for interviews and how to answer interview questions. Learners gain confidence in speaking to different employers.

Leaders, including trustees have an accurate and thorough oversight of the college. They take effective action to make continuous improvements to the college which benefit learners. For example, leaders installed height adjustable cooking hobs in the life skills kitchen areas to make the teaching and learning environment accessible to all learners.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have thorough processes in place to manage safeguarding concerns. Suitably trained designated safeguarding leads (DSL) take timely and effective action to ensure learners receive appropriate support. DSLs work well with external agencies to ensure learners receive suitable support from agencies such as the police, social services and local authority safeguarding teams. College staff go above and beyond their statutory legal duties to help learners.

Staff are highly trained to identify safeguarding concerns because leaders ensure staff receive frequent and extensive training on a variety of topics. These include neglect, self-harm, female genital mutilation, cuckooing, modern slavery, country lines, sexual violence and financial abuse.

Provider details

Unique reference number	147303
Address	Gresham Road Hounslow Middlesex TW3 4BX
Contact number	02039629009
Website	www.greatoakscollege.com
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Nickyie Thomas
Provider type	Independent specialist college
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous new provider monitoring visit report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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