

Inspection of Active Learning Trust

Linc 19 - 25

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Good

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

Information about this provider

Active Learning Trust LINC 19-25 (LINC) is a dedicated and purpose-built centre on the site of Highfields Ely Academy. LINC is part of the wider Active Learning Trust, and it provides education programmes for learners aged 19 to 25. Learners have severe learning difficulties to profound and multiple learning disabilities. More than half the learners are wheelchair users and three quarters are non-verbal. Many learners are working at a cognitive level of around 18 to 24 months. Most learners have multi-agency involvement and are supported by adult social care services. Most learners are entitled to transport and a few travel long distances to attend LINC.

Leaders provide sensory programmes that aim to develop learners' behaviour, independence and communication skills. Learners are working towards an entry level qualification with optional unit choice. Leaders select the units to best meet the learners' needs, interests and ability, such as gardening, music and hydrotherapy. The curriculum aims to support learners to engage more fully in day to day living.

At the time of the inspection, there were 14 learners attending LINC. Learners have an education, care and health (EHC) plan and are in receipt of high needs funding.

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

Learners benefit greatly from staff who know them extremely well. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of each learner's behavioural traits and the triggers for disruptive behaviour. Staff act upon the nuances of learners' non-verbal communication to skilfully redirect learners' interest, enabling them to develop effective strategies to remain focused on their learning. As a result, learners maintain good behaviour in lessons. Staff ensure that learners remain calm, continue in lessons and work effectively in groups. Furthermore, a few learners have notably reduced the extent of their self-harm behaviours because of the strategies they have been taught.

Learners benefit greatly from a good range of therapeutic support and specialist facilities. Learners have timetabled weekly use of the on-site gym, hydrotherapy pool and trampoline for rebound therapy. Specialist therapists work with staff to support learners' physical health development and well-being. Learners have set targets that staff work to in lessons for improving learners' health and care. Teachers ensure that learners spend targeted lesson time in their standing frames to improve their physical health and stamina. Teachers encourage learners to gradually build their tolerance to wearing their glasses in lessons.

Learners frequently visit a range of diverse community environments, such as walking to the local café or food bank. Learners gain confidence and resilience when accessing the community. This all contributes to many of the learners being able to participate in family life outside college, such as going to the supermarket.

Learners thrive in a calm and safe environment that staff create. Learners are punctual to lessons and their attendance is high, despite their complex medical needs. Learners develop effective strategies to be able to self-regulate, such as knowing when to take a walk or taking time out to stop feeling overwhelmed. Teaching staff embed respect and tolerance into learning. Learners show tolerance for each other, and they learn how to take turns in lesson activities. These activities contribute to learners focusing better in lessons and taking part in community-related outings.

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

Leaders have created a culture of reflection and continuous improvement among managers and staff. Leaders responded swiftly to the findings of the monitoring visit to make the improvements required. Leaders and managers have developed a purposeful and effective curriculum for learners. Leaders ensure that the curriculum incorporates extensive repetition of topics to meet their learners' development needs.

Leaders have provided accessible and high-quality accommodation, such as a hydrotherapy pool and spacious classrooms fitted with hoists. Leaders have designed the therapeutic aspects of learning, including physiotherapy, exceptionally

well. As a result, many learners increase their physical stamina to take part in lessons and other enrichment activities.

Leaders provide staff with the training they need to meet learners' care and health needs very effectively. More than half of the learners are wheelchair users and rely on staff to get them to and from the classrooms. In lessons, teaching assistants are highly efficient in using hoists to position learners, enabling them to take part in their learning. Staff work together seamlessly to position learners on the trampoline for rebound therapy lessons. As a result, lessons start and finish promptly.

Leader's and manager's communication with parents and stakeholders is strong. Leaders communicate frequently with parents, residential carers, medical practitioners, social care and placement providers to support learners' well-being. Leaders communicate individual learner behaviour strategies with the team around the learner highly effectively. Leaders plan transition into LINC very effectively and parents and carers feel well informed about learners' daily progress. Parents access an online platform that captures the lesson activities of the day. Parents message teachers and receive a timely response to any questions they may have.

Teachers plan lessons to develop learners' communication, behaviour and social interaction skills effectively. Learners improve their ability to make choices. Teachers model how to express feelings and choices through their own body language and facial expressions. Teachers use photos and mirrors with individual learners effectively. This makes clear to learners how they are showing their feelings and communicating choice through the expressions they are learning to use. Teachers ensure that learners can express consent. When learning about the body, learners can express 'no' if they are unhappy about how they are being touched. Most learners can communicate when they are not happy to take part in an activity or when they want to explore a topic further.

Teachers use their specialist experience and knowledge highly effectively to structure lessons. Teachers plan a range of sensory activities that continually revisit and build on learners' skill development. Most teaching assistants work effectively to enable learners to concentrate and participate in lessons. Learners can explore hair accessories, such as hairbrushes, hair gel and hairbands, when thinking about their hair. With support, learners explored the touch, smell and use of these accessories. Most learners were able to express their preference about a smell or which accessories they wanted to continue exploring.

Teachers do not always ensure that the purpose of the sensory activities learners do is clearly linked to real-world examples to support their learning. On occasion, teachers used shaving cream to represent snow and plastic grass when exploring meadows. In these cases, teachers do not help learners to understand a particular concept easily.

Staff use assistive technology very well to help learners to communicate and interact. Staff ensure that learners have the communication tools to be able to express when they have a concern or a disagreement. Learners gradually move on

to more advanced communication aids, such as learning to use electronic tablets. Consequently, learners can communicate their thoughts and feelings with more immediacy and confidence.

Teachers' approach to setting and assessing learners' progress against their targets is comprehensive. Teachers ensure that long- and short-term targets are appropriately aligned to the learners' EHC plans. Most learners make expected progress against their targets.

Teachers' planning for learners to develop their numeracy skills, where appropriate, is insufficient. Activities set for these learners are often interesting for learners to participate in, however, activities do not allow learners to make good progress in their understanding of number recognition, counting or using mathematics in their everyday lives.

Learners are prepared very effectively for their next steps. Learners benefit from planned visits to potential placements to support their transition plans. Staff observe learners' reactions when visiting the placements. Staff use their extensive understanding of the learners to assess if the placement is somewhere they would be happy attending. Parents are well informed about their child's next steps.

Teachers do not receive developmental feedback or professional training to further improve their teaching skills. Leaders meet frequently with staff to review learners' behaviour. Leaders support staff to identify learning points from behavioural incidents, coaching and mentoring their improvement effectively. However, leaders do not follow the same reflective approach to improve the quality of education. Leaders' feedback to staff following lesson visits is overly complimentary. Leaders do not use the information gained from lesson visits to inform staff training plans.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- To ensure that teachers develop learner's numeracy skills, where appropriate, so that learners understand and can use mathematics effectively in their everyday lives.
- To ensure that learning activities and teaching resources have a clear purpose and link as much as possible to real-life scenarios that build and reinforce the learning taking place.
- To improve management feedback and training for teachers to further improve their pedagogical skills.

Provider details

Unique reference number	148249
Address	Downham Road Ely Cambridgeshire CB6 1BD
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Website	www.highfieldschoolely.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Adam Daw
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 headteacher as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection 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

Penny Fawcus, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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His Majesty's Inspector

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