

Inspection of The Park College

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 February 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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| 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

The Park College is an independent specialist college in the London Borough of Southwark, providing education and training for learners aged 19 to 25 who have autism. It was formed in 2019 by senior leaders of Spa Education Trust.

The college offers programmes from one to four years to prepare learners for independent living and employment. At the time of the inspection, there were 24 learners in learning. All learners have an education and health care (EHC) plan.

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

Learners learn in a calm and highly supportive environment. They study a well-designed and ambitious curriculum that provides them with choice over the topics they learn. In their first year, learners have a broad and varied experience and try a number of different work-related opportunities. As they progress through the years, their experiences become tailored to their individual career aspirations. For example, learners who aspire to work with horses complete their work placements in equine stables.

Learners are highly motivated and have extremely positive attitudes to learning and their work experience placements. Tutors motivate learners by making learning activities interesting and engaging. Learners develop many skills that employers require, such as punctuality, good communication and effective customer service. They also develop the ability to follow instructions correctly. Most learners make good progress and move to positive destinations after they complete their studies. This includes further study, voluntary work or paid employment.

Learners' behaviour and attitudes are exemplary. Staff consistently set and reinforce very high expectations. They set clear rules from the start of programmes on how learners should treat one another, and learners follow these impeccably. Staff demonstrate high levels of kindness and respect when working with learners.

Learners feel safe at college because they are well supported by a small and familiar team of staff who know them well. Staff place a strong focus on learners' individual needs and well-being. They give learners appropriate individual support so that they succeed. Learners like that the college is not overcrowded, which means those who prefer a quiet space can access this.

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

Leaders and managers have designed an effective individualised curriculum for most learners that focuses on increasing their independence and readiness for employment and adulthood. As a result, most learners make good progress. However, in a few instances, staff do not sufficiently plan a challenging enough curriculum for learners who study at level one in English and mathematics, and for those already who have high levels of independence. These learners do not have sufficient opportunities to develop significant new knowledge and skills.

Tutors teach learners an excellent and very well-planned curriculum that focuses on relationships, well-being and personal safety. Through the curriculum, learners develop a very good awareness and knowledge on topics such as consent, gender and sexuality, community safety and healthy relationships. Staff provide learners with the option to join a men's or women's group. This gives them the chance to ask questions and learn about topics that are unique to them as individuals, including changes to the body and hygiene routines.

Leaders provide a wide range of development opportunities to staff. This includes training about effective teaching strategies for learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Tutors and support staff are skilled and knowledgeable in supporting and teaching learners with autism. They make learning accessible for learners. For example, staff skilfully break down large or complex tasks into small achievable steps for learners. They adeptly use gestures, modelling techniques, visual and pictorial resources, and social stories to help learners with processing information. Consequently, as a result of good teaching and support, students make good progress.

Tutors identify learners' starting points and track their progress well. They consider learners' prior achievement and carry out assessments at the start of programmes against each aspect of the curriculum. They use the results to set meaningful and challenging targets for learners and review their progress frequently. For the most part, they use this information well to plan and teach the curriculum. However, in a few instances, tutors do not consider well enough the progress learners make on their external work placements in order to adjust the level of support and learning opportunities for learners when they study in college. For example, learners who develop significant levels of independence in their external café work placements and require little support from staff do not receive the same level of autonomy in the college café.

Tutors teach topics that relate to fundamental British values extremely well through a highly effective tutorial and social skills curriculum. Tutors have carefully considered the topics they teach learners. For example, tutors have highly effective discussions with learners on how to make the college a respectful and tolerant place. As a result, learners develop excellent knowledge about democracy, freedom and expression of choices, the law, respect and tolerance.

Leaders and managers provide learners with an extra-curricular programme which is very effectively designed to further develop learners' individual interests and talents. Staff seek feedback from learners about the clubs they would like staff to organise for them. Learners thoroughly enjoy the wide variety of activities and clubs running, including yoga, basketball, gardening, swimming and dance. Learners are also able to attend trips out to museums.

Leaders, managers and tutors provide many excellent opportunities for learners to participate in a range of community and social action projects. Learner participation is high, and they organise many of these projects themselves in small groups. Projects include regular environmentally focused events such as litter picking in the local park and recycling initiatives. Learners participate in external ambassadorial programmes to make products for homeless charities, such as organising and distributing toiletry bags.

Leaders and tutors provide learners with high-quality careers advice and guidance. Through their curriculum, tutors plan a wide range of opportunities to help learners choose a career pathway and make informed decisions about their next steps. They provide learners with careers interviews, guest speakers and visits to employers to

explore different job roles. As a result, the majority of learners move to positive and meaningful destinations when they leave college.

The board of directors, leaders and managers have good oversight of the college. They have thorough quality assurance processes in place to review continuously the provision so they can identify strengths and areas for development. Board members receive good quality termly reports from leaders. They find the reports helpful as these provide them with an accurate and detailed overview of the college and how it is performing. The board of directors effectively supports and challenges leaders to make continuous improvements to the learner experience.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Make sure learners who study at higher levels and have high levels of independence receive a challenging curriculum, including when on work experience placements.
- Make sure staff capture the progress that learners make on their external work placements so that staff can plan suitable levels of teaching and support for learners when in college.

Provider details

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| Unique reference number | 148174 |
| Address | 5 Kennington Park Place London SE11 4AS |
| Contact number | 020 7735 4154 |
| Website | https://theparkcollege.org |
| Principal, CEO or equivalent | Catriona Guyler-Kone |
| 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 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

Joanna Walters, lead inspector
Ben Walsh

His Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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