

Valley College

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

Unique reference number:	147464
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Inspection dates:	4 and 5 December 2024
Type of provider:	Independent specialist college
Address:	Clod Lane Haslingden BB4 6LR

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Valley College was inspected in September 2023. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in resolving the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Valley College is an independent specialist college based in Haslingden, Lancashire. The college also has a satellite centre in Blackpool. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Sea View Trust. The college opened in 2019 and provides education and support for young people aged 18 to 25 with severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and/or autism spectrum disorder. The college offers three learning pathways in independence, employability and employment. At the time of the inspection, there were 12 learners on the independence pathway, 31 on the employability pathway and six on the employment pathway. Learners study on programmes from entry level 1 to entry level 3. All learners have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that they plan, design and implement curriculums that are ambitious for learners? Significant progress

Following the previous inspection, leaders swiftly reviewed and redesigned the curriculums. Leaders, teachers and support staff have worked closely to develop and implement new curriculums that meet the individual needs of learners and help them to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that they need for life after college.

Leaders have developed and implemented a robust framework for teaching. Staff use the framework flexibly and carefully to plan lessons that meet the specific needs of their learners. Consequently, teaching effectively meets learners' individual needs.

Leaders have introduced new topics and subjects into the curriculums, including a greater focus on health and well-being, preparation for adulthood and careers guidance. Staff are now better equipped to support their learners to develop the skills and behaviours that they need to move on to their next steps after college.

Teachers work extremely well with support workers to set and monitor learners' specific targets. Staff set targets that are relevant to the learners' EHC plans, outcomes and aspirations. They frequently monitor the progress that learners make

towards these targets. As a result, staff ensure that learners make sustained progress throughout their time at college.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in improving the quality of education for learners, including those on entry level 1 programmes? Significant progress

Following the previous inspection, leaders quickly reviewed the qualifications that they offered alongside how well learners achieved these qualifications. Learners now work towards a series of incremental qualifications throughout their time at college. For example, when learners achieve an award at entry level 2, they then move on to a certificate at entry level two.

Teachers now carefully consider and plan the structure of topics, making amendments where needed, to ensure that learners' specific learning needs are met. Staff use effective teaching strategies to introduce learners to new concepts, knowledge and skills. Topics are now frequently revisited and reinforced so that learners can recall their learning before moving on to the next topic.

Learners benefit from a range of additional and supportive therapies to help them to prepare for adulthood and to develop and extend their learning. For example, learners access speech and language therapies to develop their communication skills and hydrotherapy to support their physical movement.

Teachers use the detailed information that they collect and collate from learners' EHC plans, health reports and reports from learners' previous schools to expertly plan and structure learning. They make suitable adaptations and use a variety of resources, such as Makaton, speech devices and visual aids, to support an inclusive learning environment where learners can participate fully in activities.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that tutors receive specialist and comprehensive special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) training? Significant progress

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality education for learners with SEND. This has been realised through rigorous continual professional training and development for staff.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have rightly focused on the development of teaching and support staff's skills. They swiftly implemented specialised specific training for staff. Staff now benefit from a wide range of effective and purposeful training and development. For example, teachers attended training on the effective deployment of teaching assistants in the classroom. As a result, teachers now feel more confident and better informed in how to best utilise teaching assistants in lessons. Leaders and managers closely monitor the impact of training

through effective strategies such as themed lesson visits and one-to-one meetings with staff.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in improving quality assurance processes? Significant progress

Following the previous inspection, leaders quickly implemented stringent quality assurance processes to improve the quality of education that learners receive. Managers have introduced college-wide quality assurance reports that are reviewed frequently. As a result, managers now have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.

Leaders use self-assessment processes effectively. They have produced a comprehensive self-assessment report that is based on the previous inspection report and reviews of the curriculum. The quality improvement plan is drawn from the self-assessment report and has specific and measurable actions for improvement that has helped leaders to rapidly improve the quality of education.

Leaders and managers set high expectations for staff. Since the previous inspection, many staff have exited the college due to the prioritisation of actions to improve the quality of education and the resulting rapid pace of change. New and remaining staff value the support of leaders and managers in developing and introducing highly effective quality assurance processes that have decreased their workload, improved their confidence and improved their teaching practice.

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