

# Oakbridge Special Education

Monitoring visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Joanna Walters, Her Majesty's Inspector

**Inspection dates:** 12–13 May 2021

**Type of provider:** Independent specialist college

**Address:** C/O Oak Lodge School,  
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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

From autumn 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to independent specialist colleges newly ESFA-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.

Oakbridge Special Education (Oakbridge) is linked with Oak Lodge School in East Finchley. Oakbridge is a subsidiary company of Barnet Special Education Trust and has its own board of directors. One of the directors is the executive head teacher of the Trust.

At the time of the monitoring visit, Oakbridge had 18 learners with high needs. Learners are from the London Borough of Barnet. They follow two-year programmes that are tailored to their individual needs. The aim of the programmes is to teach learners skills to live independently and experience the world of work.

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? Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have a clear rationale for the curriculum they offer. They have developed the provision in partnership with Barnet local authority to meet local needs. Each learner follows a curriculum that is based on their individual education, health and care plan (EHC plan) outcomes. Where appropriate, learners complete formal qualifications. However, leaders recognise they have further work to do to develop the curriculum so that learners develop further the skills they need to live independently and to prepare them for adult life.

Leaders ensure that learners have good opportunities to develop the skills they need for employment. Leaders have set up a shop in the local community for learners to work in. This enables learners to experience working in a real retail environment and engage with the local community. The shop complements the social enterprise curriculum well where learners make products to sell in the shop. However, leaders do not ensure that learners have sufficient opportunities to develop their digital skills through the enterprise curriculum.

Leaders ensure that staff are well-qualified and skilled to do their roles. Tutors and support staff are experienced in teaching and supporting learners who need extra help. They have detailed knowledge of learners' needs. This enables staff to teach and support learners in a highly effective way.

Tutors and therapists work closely together to design fitness and mobility activities in lessons. They ensure that learners benefit from activities that meet their complex physical needs. This supports learners to make complete whole-body movements independently, such as being able to stand and walk using standing frames.

Leaders recognise that they need to expand the board members' expertise so they can further develop the curriculum and quality of education learners receive. The board does not have enough expertise in post-16 education. Consequently, it does not provide sufficient challenge and scrutiny to leaders and managers.

**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? Reasonable progress**

Tutors assess accurately learners' abilities at the start of the programme. Tutors use learners' EHC plan outcomes to develop a personalised curriculum. However, tutors do not plan some parts of the curriculum in sufficient detail. As a consequence, at times, tutors miss opportunities to develop learners' knowledge and skills in these subjects further.

Tutors provide clear, step-by-step instruction checklists that help learners to remain focused and successfully complete tasks. There is a clear structure to lessons that helps learners become familiar with classroom routines, such as a review of learning at the end of each lesson. As a result, learners are able successfully to complete the activities set in class, such as potting plants in a hanging basket.

Tutors have high expectations of learners and take an ambitious approach to challenge learners to achieve. They skilfully encourage learners to use alternative forms of verbal communication, such as sign language, to make valuable contributions in lessons. Staff take every opportunity to celebrate learners' achievements.

Leaders and tutors monitor learners' progress thoroughly. They ensure that learners' progress is recorded in detail, for example through photographs and videos of learners' progress in meeting specific targets. Staff communicate effectively with parents, who receive a helpful daily overview of the work completed so they know what learners have learned at college.

Staff provide effective support for learners' transition, both into and moving on from the college. They plan learners' transition to the next stage of their life carefully. As a result, learners are able to successfully progress to positive destinations such as further learning, supported living or engaging in community activities.

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

Leaders have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place. Leaders adhere to safer recruitment procedures. This ensures that staff are suitable to work with vulnerable learners.

Leaders and staff have a strong focus on safeguarding learners. The board of directors has effective oversight of safeguarding practices at the college. It receives reports of safeguarding incidents and how they have been managed.

Tutors and support staff create an extremely safe, calm and purposeful learning environment. Staff quickly identify when learners become anxious and offer them the opportunity to attend the sensory spaces so they can manage their anxiety. This enables learners to remain calm and safe when at college. Learners very much enjoy their time at college.

Tutors ensure that health and safety is a key priority in lessons. For example, learners develop detailed knowledge on how to work safely when they use tools to make herb boxes in a gardening lesson.

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