

Trinity Specialist College Ltd

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates

23–25 May 2017

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	Provision for learners with high needs	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Inadequate	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good enough to enable all students to make good or better progress.
- The curriculum does not meet students' needs, prior learning, or extend their learning well enough.
- Teachers do not consistently set students sufficiently challenging or individualised targets.
- Managers do not prepare students for their transition from the college soon enough, so that students fully understand their potential next steps.
- Trustees do not receive sufficient information and data on students' achievement and progress to enable them to challenge managers effectively and to hold them to account for improvements.
- Managers have not ensured that the English and mathematics improvement strategy is consistently implemented across the college; as a result, students do not make good enough progress in developing these skills.
- Managers' observations of teaching, learning and assessment focus too much on what teachers do rather than on the skills students develop and the progress they make.

The provider has the following strengths

- Managers have rectified many of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection, particularly in safeguarding and the appointment of teaching and specialist staff.
- Students with the most complex needs develop their communication skills very well as a result of the support they receive from the skilled multi-disciplinary staff.
- Staff use behaviour management strategies very effectively to enable students to remain in learning.
- Trustees are very experienced and provide managers with good levels of support; they have a good understanding of the complex needs of the students, and of the strengths and weaknesses at the college.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Trinity Specialist College (the college) opened in September 2011 for young people with learning disabilities and/or autism with challenging behaviour, as appropriate provision was not available locally. In August 2015 the college was successful in gaining independent service provider status from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).
- The college offers provision on two sites in Sutton Coldfield: The Lindridge and Clifton Road Youth Centre. College students live in Birmingham, Walsall and Warwickshire with their families, in adult foster care and in residential homes. Students work at pre-entry level to entry level 3. The college also offers a life skills day service for young people aged 25 or over, or for those who no longer receive education funding. This provision is funded through the social care and health budget and was not in scope for this inspection.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- To improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment leaders should:
 - ensure that teachers set students targets that are individualised and sufficiently challenging to enable them to achieve their medium- and long-term goals.
 - ensure that all teachers and learning support staff plan for and maximise every opportunity to develop further students' English and mathematics skills in all learning and social settings
 - ensure that managers who carry out observations of teaching, learning and assessment assess how well students develop their skills, improve the standard of their work and make progress from their starting points, and assess the quality of students' targets and the range and appropriateness of their learning experiences
 - ensure that managers support teachers and learning support staff by providing them with ongoing high-quality training and by working with other practitioners to develop their skills and practices
 - ensure that each student has learning activities that relate well to their starting points, their hobbies, interests, future goals and ambitions at the college and in the community.
- Ensure that managers prepare students for their transition from the college in good time so that students agree to and understand their progression opportunities and next steps.
- Ensure that trustees have access to detailed information, particularly progress and achievement data, so that they can challenge managers effectively and hold them to account for improvements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The trustees and managers have worked hard and with significant success to rectify many of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection in March 2016. They have rightly prioritised the improvement of safeguarding and the management of students' behaviour. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of student incidents that require intervention, and an increase in the recognition of, and in the number of, safeguarding referrals made by staff. However, the changes have not yet led to a consistently good quality of provision for learning.
- Most staff have high ambitions for their students and are proud of what students achieve at the college. Teachers of students with the most complex needs use information about their starting points to plan learning well and provide individualised learning activities and effective support. The majority of students improve their skills development and increase their levels of confidence, particularly on pre-entry-level courses. However, a few students on higher-level courses do not make good enough progress.
- Managers have implemented a new curriculum which focuses appropriately on developing students' independent skills. However, it does not include a wide enough range of subjects to develop students' skills further. For example, staff do not use well enough naturally occurring opportunities in the college and in the community to extend and/or add variety to learning. In a few cases, the range of activities is a duplication of prior learning experiences. As a result, a few students maintain previously learned skills, but they do not always enhance existing skills, or develop new skills.
- Managers' use of data to monitor the performance of different groups of students and to inform improvements is too variable to be effective. For example, managers use information well to monitor carefully the number and range of student behavioural issues and safeguarding incidents. However, they do not monitor sufficiently the rate of progress and achievement made by different groups of students.
- Managers observe classroom-based teaching and learning frequently throughout the year. The completed records show that the feedback to teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) focuses too much on teaching activities, rather than on evaluating how much learning is taking place for each student as a result of teaching. The suggestions for improvement do not identify clearly what teachers and LSAs need to do to improve or how to share good practice with their peers. As a result, managers do not have a full and accurate picture of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers adopt effective performance management strategies to tackle staff underperformance. This has resulted in a small number of staff leaving the college. However, performance review improvement targets are not sufficiently specific or detailed, and are not linked to the observations of learning and support. They are not monitored by managers to ensure that they are achieved in a timely manner and improve the quality of provision. The result is that the quality of provision, though improved, has not improved sufficiently to be judged good.
- The programme of staff development is well conceived and focuses on developing the skills and knowledge of staff in a wide range of topics, such as equality of opportunity, the 'Prevent' duty, the safe handling of people, first aid and behaviour management. In

addition, managers provide staff with ongoing, helpful advice and support, for example when dealing with students' challenging behaviour. However, staff training does not focus sufficiently on continually improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

- Managers' overall evaluation of the provision is accurate and in line with the judgements made by inspectors. However, they do not give sufficient weight to the weaknesses that have a significant impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, such as the quality of target setting and the relevance and diversity of the curriculum.
- Managers review improvement action plans regularly; however, the plans are not updated frequently enough. They do not provide managers with clear enough measures and milestones by which they can review the effectiveness and evaluate thoroughly the impact of their actions. Consequently, this has slowed down the rate at which they can bring about sustainable and widespread improvement in all areas of the college's work.
- Managers' implementation of the English and mathematics strategy is not yet fully effective. Students develop their communication skills well, but the development of other English skills and mathematics is too inconsistent to be good. At the time of the inspection, for the few students for whom it would be appropriate, none were working towards achieving accredited qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Leaders and managers have a clear and ambitious vision for the college. This includes working with partners to provide students with a wider range of progression opportunities in the future, such as participating in community social enterprise activities and living in supported accommodation.
- Managers and staff promote a culture of mutual respect and tolerance for others in the college community; this has resulted in students demonstrating these attributes well when engaging with each other and listening to staff. Staff provide students with appropriate information on topics such as 'stranger danger' and using the internet safely. Students have recently elected members of the student council at its first meeting.
- Leaders have contracted with specialist external agencies such as an educational psychologist and a music therapist to provide effective support for students with physical, behavioural and communication needs. This specialist support has contributed to a reduction in the number of student behavioural incidents and to improvements in the levels of students' confidence and skills development. Despite the best efforts of managers, a speech and language therapist has only recently been contracted to support students; it is therefore too soon to judge the impact of this work.

The governance of the provider

- A board of trustees was established in May 2016. The five trustees are well qualified and have a wide range of expertise and skills that they are already using well to support managers. For example, the trustee with responsibility for safeguarding is providing managers with helpful support and guidance on the management of students' behaviour and in ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are effective.
- Trustees have a clear understanding of their strategic role. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses at the college and of the complex needs of the student cohort. A new trustee, with specialist knowledge of teaching and learning, has recently been appointed to ensure that the board has the expertise to support and

challenge the improvements required in teaching, learning and assessment.

- Trustees are very committed to making improvements at the college. They meet frequently and managers provide them with regular reports on students' behaviour, safeguarding and the curriculum. However, often the reports do not provide trustees with sufficient information to enable them to challenge managers effectively and to hold them to account for improvements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers have responded well to the findings from the previous inspection, when safeguarding was judged to be ineffective. Arrangements to safeguard students are now appropriate and focus well on the needs of the students. Students feel included and safe; most staff ensure that students adopt the correct health and safety practices in learning settings. Managers have ensured that students are protected on work-experience placements, for example, by ensuring that employers have employers' liability insurance cover. Staff are now trained in, and follow the correct protocols for, the administration of medication to students.
- Staff and trustees participate in regular training and updating on safeguarding. As a result, they have a good understanding of the potential risks to students and take the necessary measures to ensure that they are safe. Staff use well the new college online system for referring safeguarding concerns. Managers respond swiftly and provide staff with helpful advice and guidance. As a result, the number of safeguarding referrals has increased significantly.
- Staff and trustees have had 'Prevent' duty training and most have a good understanding of how to keep their students safe from harm. External monitoring of internet activity quickly identifies any inappropriate use by staff and students. However, the strategy to ensure that students are protected from radicalisation and extremism is at an early stage of implementation and requires further improvement.
- Checks on staff, including criminal records checks, are up to date and accurate.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not plan consistently well enough to ensure that they meet the full range of student abilities. They do not consistently challenge students effectively and often focus too much on task completion rather than on skills development. As a result, a few students do not make good enough progress in all lessons. However, the small number of students with the most complex needs make good progress, because staff use information about each student's starting points well to plan and meet their individual needs effectively.
- Target setting requires improvement. Targets are often too broad to enable the effective monitoring of students' progress. Too often, teachers set targets for a group of students which do not take sufficient account of their individual needs and do not enable them to progress towards specific outcomes, including the further development of their English and mathematics skills.

- Assessment practice is not consistently effective. Although improvements have been made by managers, the large majority of assessments of students' starting points are not sufficiently detailed or linked to students' education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Teachers do not consistently provide clear and constructive feedback to students in lessons; they rely too much on the use of words such as 'good' or phrases such as 'good sitting' rather than describing more precisely what was good and what could be improved.
- Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced. The college has responded swiftly to an area for development from the previous inspection, to increase the number of qualified teachers. Managers have appointed an experienced teaching team, including a literacy specialist to improve the provision. Teaching and support staff receive significant training in key areas, for example safeguarding, the Mental Capacity Act and behaviour management. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this new team across the college. All staff have had 'Prevent' duty training but they have not yet translated this effectively, where appropriate, into language and situations that students can easily understand.
- Students make the expected progress in the majority of lessons. On pre-entry-level courses, students make good progress, particularly in communication and engagement with others, where they demonstrate significantly improved behaviours. On higher-level courses, teachers do not challenge students sufficiently, and the learning tasks are often too complex and do not take sufficient account of students' prior attainment.
- Staff manage challenging behaviour very well. For example, a very distressed student was dealt with calmly, respectfully and very effectively. A student who was disturbed by the loud noise from this incident was given ear defenders and taken into the garden to relax. However, on a very few occasions, staff do not ask students' permission before moving them or before using a hand-over-hand approach.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers promote mathematics effectively using naturally occurring opportunities, for example counting filled plant pots, pricing shopping list items and adding ingredients. Consequently, students make good progress in developing their mathematics skills. However, this is not yet consistently good across all courses.
- Staff do not promote English skills development well enough, particularly on higher-level courses. Teachers' handwriting on whiteboards is not legible for the students in the group and they often use language that is too complicated for the level that students are working at. As a result, students get confused and are not able to understand fully what has been written.
- Staff develop students' communication skills well. In particular, in lessons for students with the most complex communication needs, teachers plan learning and use communication resources well; as a result the students engage fully in learning. Teachers work productively with skilled learning support staff, using visual prompts, signing and communication aids, so that all students make good progress in developing their communication skills. Students are respectful of each other; teachers encourage turn-taking and promote the awareness of others very effectively.
- LSAs work effectively with students and teachers. A well-qualified LSA provides weekly British sign language (BSL) support to staff to improve their skills and to help them to develop the communication skills of students.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Most students enjoy their time at college and make friends well within a supportive and positive atmosphere. Their attendance is good.
- Behaviour management is very good. Teachers and support staff have all received foundation-level training in behaviour management, and this has resulted in them adopting very effective interventions to minimise behavioural incidents, so that students with extremely challenging behaviour can continue to learn in lessons. Staff recognise circumstances that might trigger incidents, and are skilful in taking appropriate action to avoid these.
- A psychologist and music therapist support students very well. The psychologist has worked very successfully with individual students to enable them to manage their own behaviours with appropriate strategies, for example to manage anger or develop boundaries. The music therapist has worked very effectively with individuals and small groups to help them to communicate more effectively and to learn to listen to others and take turns. Both therapists also work with the teaching staff so that their activities align with other strategies and goals for individual students.
- Opportunities for work-related experience are good. Around two thirds of students on higher-level courses benefit from developing their employability skills in a realistic work environment. For example, 16 students attend a local garden centre for one day a week throughout the year. They are supported well by college staff to carry out tasks involving activities that have included the restoration of a greenhouse, as well as digging and planting. However, managers have not yet developed internal opportunities for work experience for students for whom external work experience would not be appropriate.
- One student has worked successfully in a supported work placement in a pub, where they confidently and competently undertake tasks such as greeting members of the public and laying the tables.
- Students know how to keep safe and are able to refer to the training they have received, such as in e-safety. They know who to go to if they feel bullied by other students. However, a few teachers did not ensure that all students complied fully with health and safety requirements, for example wearing protective aprons in the kitchen.
- Staff actively promote the importance of healthy eating to students. This concept is reinforced well by staff who support students effectively to prepare a healthy lunch for themselves and everyone else at the college.
- Enrichment opportunities are appropriate. All students have the opportunity to go swimming or to visit a gym weekly. Those students on pre-entry-level courses have access to a sensory gym. However, other activities to enhance students' experience further are too few.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Students improve their communication skills well during their time at the college and learn, for example, to talk to unfamiliar visitors at the college. They also improve their behaviour, so that they can participate more effectively in college activities. This is a

significant step forward for many of them. However, staff do not yet capture well enough students' overall progress in relation to their starting points; they do not have accurate data in relation to the progress they make in all aspects of their learning programme.

- Students do not develop basic concepts of number well enough across all activities. A few students are not studying for a qualification where this would be appropriate for them. For example, a few students have a target in their EHC plan to achieve an English and mathematics functional skill qualification, and although they are developing their skills well, they are not working towards an externally accredited outcome.
- The nine students who left in 2016 achieved their qualifications, and five of the six leavers have so far achieved their vocational qualifications this year.
- The large majority of students have achieved their targets this year, but these are not always sufficiently challenging, particularly on courses at higher levels.
- Staff do not monitor outcomes data in relation to race, gender and disability, so do not know which groups are performing best, or where there are any gaps in performance.
- The destinations for students leaving the college in 2016 were positive; all students progressed to an organisation where they can continue to participate in the community.
- Staff do not start transition planning and preparing students for leaving the college early enough; at the time of the inspection only one of the six leavers had an agreed transition action plan, with an anticipated destination.
- Many students on higher-level courses develop their employment-related skills well in realistic settings such as a garden centre and a cycle maintenance shop.
- Students who prepare meals for the college lunch demonstrate high standards of work, producing food that is enjoyed by the whole college community. However, these high standards are not evident across all the provision: in a minority of activities students were not encouraged by staff to work to a high enough standard, and staff were satisfied with only a basic standard of task completion.

Provider details

Unique reference number	141703
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	26
Principal/CEO	Sally Evans (MBE)
Telephone number	0121 378 3242
Website	www.trinityspecialistcollege.co.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	1	25	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	26							
Funding received from:	Education and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the operations manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Denise Olander, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joyce Deere	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Ofsted Inspector

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