

Oakwood Court College (Phoenix Learning Care Ltd)

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates

11–13 September 2018

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Students make excellent progress in their personal development and behaviour. They gain skills that help them to be more independent in their daily lives.
- Students reduce their anxieties, learn calming techniques and quickly become ready for learning. Tutors and therapists work well as a team and provide good individualised support.
- Students gain recognised qualifications to support them in their future careers. Students improve their communication particularly well.
- Students are extremely well prepared for employment. They have very good opportunities for work experience and develop very good employability skills.
- Governors know the provision well and set high ambitions for the college. They use their expertise well to challenge and support managers.
- Decisive leadership has led to significant improvements to the provision.
- Teaching staff provide teaching, learning and assessment that are highly individualised and challenging. Students often exceed their own expectations.
- Managers, tutors and learning support assistants are passionate about their work and use excellent strategies to help students learn.
- Managers do not use the information available sufficiently to monitor and analyse performance effectively. A few aspects of the provision are not improving as fast as they could be.
- Tutors fail to set learning goals for pre-entry-level students that support their progress as effectively as for those working at higher levels, so a small number are not progressing swiftly enough.
- Students receive good information, advice and guidance throughout their programmes, but not all students have a clear plan to help them understand their next steps.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Oakwood Court College is a residential and day independent specialist college, operated by Phoenix Learning and Care Limited since 1998. The college offers vocational learning for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Programmes are offered in horticulture and conservation, catering, retail, vehicle maintenance, enterprise and information technology as well as independent living skills. Many students have additional needs and require specialist support provided by a counsellor and a speech and language therapist. The majority of students work at level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework.
- The college operates from Dawlish in Devon and Torpoint in Cornwall. At the time of the inspection there were 56 students enrolled on study programmes and five on internships. Twenty-four of the current students are residential. Since the previous inspection, a new principal has been appointed, who took up post in September 2016. The classroom and workshop accommodation have been refurbished and redesigned.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve performance management by ensuring that information is used effectively so that:
 - managers and leaders use it to check for any significant variations in the achievements of individual and groups of students and to plan further improvements
 - students' destinations and retention rates are collected in enough detail to enable meaningful analysis, drive improvements to the provision and celebrate success.
- Improve the setting of all learning goals by ensuring that tutors set students at pre-entry level the same high-quality learning goals that other students receive and that these are checked frequently and students' progress monitored effectively.
- Improve the quality of information, advice and guidance by ensuring that students have realistic and ambitious plans based on their interests and future goals or careers and are clear about their next steps.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- A new principal was appointed in September 2016 and, together with senior leaders, has succeeded in bringing about improvements across the two sites, including the curriculum. The quality of the provision has improved considerably, student numbers have increased and all the previous inspection recommendations have been addressed. Over the past year, a few key managers have left, and as a result progress in some areas of performance management has not been as fast as intended.
- Senior leaders act quickly to recruit to key posts and maintain consistency during periods of staff changes so that students are not adversely affected. A very experienced director of learning has recently started at the college, and other appointments such as a behaviour management coordinator, an employability coordinator and learning support assistants are being recruited. These staff will increase the capability of the staff group to manage the increase in students with complex needs.
- Leaders and managers oversee developments and improvements well. For example, the Dawlish base has been refurbished to give three new teaching classrooms, a sensory room and a calm room. Students enjoy immensely a trampoline and large adult swing. The Torpoint base has been renovated to give a very good range of resources, including a sensory room and a virtual reality room. On both sites, rooms have been colour coded and 'calmed' to meet the needs of the students, especially those with autism spectrum disorder.
- Leaders, managers and governors use the funding for students with high needs well. Managers have designed the provision effectively around a number of employment pathways at different levels. Students have programmes that include a good variety of additional activities and several work experience opportunities, often undertaking different work experiences within one week.
- Leaders, managers and staff work well with employers to ensure that the vocational curriculum is planned well to meet students' needs and to take account of local and regional employment needs. Many of the employers have been working with the college for over five years and speak highly of the level of communication and good behaviour of the students. Students have good opportunities for work experience, and these are leading to an increasing number of sustained employment outcomes.
- Managers provide frequent and supportive formal and informal supervision as well as appraisals for staff. Staff are motivated by the good continuing professional development that includes support for the integration of safeguarding, literacy and numeracy into every subject.
- Managers' observations of teaching, learning and assessment result in improved professional practice, such as better use of resources. Staff appreciate the feedback they receive on, for example, their questioning techniques. Staff turnover is low, with many staff achieving promotion within the college.
- Managers and staff are passionate about their work and continually strive for improvements in their practice. As a result, the college is improving. Managers and staff are enthusiastic and hold high aspirations for the students, who are motivated to achieve in areas they

thought were not possible, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards.

- Managers and staff maintain a very effective focus on the importance of mathematics, English and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. A new information technology (IT) suite of equipment supports the development of students' IT skills well.
- All staff teach fundamental British values well and reinforce the importance of tolerance, such as for religious differences and sexual identity. Students show respect for one another, staff and visitors. Managers plan and provide good opportunities to teach the principles of democracy, such as voting for student council members and for the achievement of merit awards. Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Managers evaluate the provision annually by collecting the views of parents and carers, students, staff and a report from each department within the college. The self-assessment report is well linked to the quality improvement plan and has become a valuable tool to identify strengths and weaknesses and sustain improvements. Managers know the college well, and the report accurately reflects its strengths and weaknesses.
- Managers do not use all the information available effectively to monitor performance such as individual students' achievements or the progress of groups. Therefore, it is difficult for them to check that no students are being disadvantaged or underachieving. Managers monitor students' destinations and retention rates, but the information they collect is not detailed enough to be fully analysed to improve the provision.
- Students receive good, impartial careers advice from employability staff during their programmes, but this guidance is not collated into a clear and realistic plan. As a result, a few students do not know what next steps are needed for them to achieve their independence, employment or further education.

The governance of the provider

- Governance has strengthened since the previous inspection. Governors know the provision well and have been successful in setting high ambitions and expectations for the college.
- Governors use their valuable experience in safeguarding, teaching, special educational needs and business well to challenge, support and drive improvements. For example, expertise in finance has been used to map out commercial practice and contributed to ensuring that the provision is sustainable over the longer term.
- The chief executive and leaders have developed a clear vision and act quickly to ensure that the right staff are in the right posts to meet the requirements of the college.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers have created a very effective safeguarding culture and a strong safeguarding team that reviews safeguarding practice regularly. Since the previous inspection, security has improved, with CCTV installed around the college and security door passes. Students feel confident about security and feel safe at the college.
- Staff attend frequent updates on safeguarding practice and are knowledgeable and skilled in helping students understand how to keep safe online and the dangers of becoming

involved with people with extreme views.

- All staff are well trained in safeguarding and information on aspects of safeguarding are integrated well throughout the curriculum. Students can raise safeguarding concerns with any member of staff and know that they will be dealt with appropriately.
- Managers and staff ensure that staff and students are safe through a variety of relevant processes and procedures. Tutors emphasise health and safety well in all classes, and students receive clear instructions on the cleaning of tools, safe carrying techniques and storage.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Tutors plan and provide teaching, learning and assessment well to meet individual needs. They use suitably challenging tasks well to prepare students for adult life and employment. Consequently, students make good and often better than expected progress from their starting points.
- Tutors support students very effectively in their transition to college. Parents are involved extremely well in this process through home visits and discussions about how students can best be supported to settle quickly. Tutors provide anxious students with very good support and guidance so that, within a short period of time, they are able to mix easily with their peers.
- Tutors and students work effectively together to gain an accurate assessment of their starting points. Tutors know the students well and use the outcomes in their education, health and care (EHC) plans effectively by breaking them down into manageable short-, medium- and long-term learning goals. Tutors review these frequently, and where appropriate set new learning goals linked to a student's planned destination.
- Students are very well supported to achieve their learning goals. Tutors provide individualised and flexible support for each student that encourages independence and self-reliance. For example, students learn how to buy tickets and travel on trains and buses confidently and independently.
- Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced. The large majority use their expertise well, for example with skilful questioning techniques and suitable aids to support students to improve their communication skills.
- Teaching and support staff give students useful and immediate feedback about their performance. Students appreciate this and most use it well to adjust their behaviour and develop positive attitudes to learning.
- Parents have a good relationship with staff and take an active part in the planning of personalised programmes. Staff communicate well with parents and share strategies to facilitate learning at home. As a result, students are able to stay in class and transfer their skills effectively between home, class and work.
- Tutors manage behaviour extremely effectively and sensitively. Residential and educational staff have effective handovers at the start and end of the day to ensure that care for students is seamless. Students are provided with well-thought-out strategies to enable them to manage their own behaviour.
- Tutors and therapists work together very effectively to set appropriate learning goals.

They use good-quality learning resources effectively to help students concentrate. For example, a model of a brain was used to help students to identify how they feel by pointing to the area that reacts to certain stimuli. A tutor demonstrated how effective it is to screw up paper and throw it into a bin when feeling angry. Parents have reported that students also use this technique at home. Students value the good-quality resources such as the chill-out room at Torpoint, with access to up-to-date IT, music and music technology, in addition to the development of a virtual reality room.

- Tutors develop students' literacy skills well throughout lessons. For example, tutors use colourful teaching aids particularly effectively to teach students how to construct sentences. Tutors have designed highly visual and colour-coded timetables that help students to become more independent.
- Teaching and support staff integrate respect for difference very well within teaching and the culture of the college. Therapists tackle inequality quickly and effectively in therapy sessions. Diversity is quietly celebrated without drawing any attention that may cause embarrassment. Tutors support students to continue to practise their religious faiths and take them to church or other places of worship if they so wish.
- Staff have a good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty, peer-on-peer abuse and online exploitation. Tutors discuss the 'Prevent' duty in a meaningful way with students throughout their programmes so that they have a good understanding of the dangers relating to radicalisation and extremism. Personal tutors meet with vulnerable students individually to maximise their understanding.
- Tutors and managers listen carefully to, and take account of students' views through the one-to-one weekly tutorial sessions and monthly student council meetings. Students know that staff take notice of their views and act on their suggestions for change.
- Tutors do not set learning goals for students at pre-entry level as effectively as they do for students working at entry level. In particular, they do not set learning goals well enough to identify small incremental steps of development; consequently, a few students do not make sufficiently rapid progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

- Students take tremendous pride in their achievements. They value themselves and become very confident. They are able to describe what they have learned and how the staff have supported them. Students who were previously unable to control their emotions are able to describe the calming techniques they have learned.
- Students benefit from exceptional work experience placements that develop skills such as teamwork, following instructions, caring for others, travelling safely and timekeeping. Employers welcome students and report how they contribute positively to their businesses. A learner who had previously thought college was pointless now sees how much she has progressed and is working towards her realistic goal of employment in the childcare sector.
- Students develop good physical and mental health. Students know that exercise is good for them, choose healthy lifestyles and enjoy sports and outdoor activities. These include the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards and volunteering at the local football club. Students benefit

from discussing their mental and physical health with the therapy team or counsellor.

- Students are very well behaved and comply with college guidelines for behaviour. Students learn not to react to the poor behaviour of others, and as a result their behaviour improves. Students know the behaviour and dress standards that employers are looking for. They conduct themselves very well, develop positive attitudes to employment and enjoy their work. Their work experience often results in paid employment. Students' excellent attitudes play a strong part in their good progress and achievements.
- Students' attendance is very good and punctuality is excellent. Students know where they need to be and have timetables appropriate to their needs.
- Students grow in confidence and are very well prepared for work through work experience and internships in retail, customer services, plumbing and horticulture. They learn about their rights and responsibilities as an employee and learn to work cooperatively with others.
- Students enjoy an outstanding variety of enrichment activities which develop their physical and mental health. For example, they go to the gym and take part in exercise classes such as 'boxercise'. Other enrichment activities include swimming, trampolining, cycling, football and tennis.
- Students take pride in contributing to useful community-based projects such as fundraising for the air ambulance and helping to clean up the beach. Students attend external youth clubs, sports clubs and slimming groups, where they mix with other young people and improve their social skills. All students undertake voluntary work in the community, including helping at the local food bank.
- Students have a very good understanding of how to stay safe online and they can apply this knowledge practically. They know how people can change their identity online and how employers might view social networking profiles. They know what bullying is and report that staff are quick to respond to any bullying incidents.
- Students become more independent and improve their skills in daily living very well. A few students become able to live independently. Students know how to look after themselves, to clean, cook, keep money safe, budget and look presentable.
- Students have good awareness of their employment choices, as these are well covered in employability sessions. They receive high-quality information, advice and guidance throughout their programmes and are well informed about how to choose careers. However, they are not able to use this information to its full potential, as they do not have a realistic and ambitious overall plan for their future career or next steps.

Outcomes for students

Good

- Students achieve good outcomes during their time at the college and achieve their learning goals within their EHC plans. Local authority commissioners speak highly of the staff and their focus on the outcomes in the plans. Parents appreciate the progress made by their young people and comment that it is often beyond their expectations.
- Since the previous inspection, tutors have worked hard to ensure that more students undertake and achieve nationally recognised qualifications. Students achieve high rates of achievement in numeracy and literacy. Students who have previously been too nervous to

sit an examination are supported well to take and pass examinations.

- Students make good or better than expected progress in all aspects of their programmes. Students' progress with their personal and communication skills is especially good. They become less frustrated and readier to learn in other subject areas.
- Students' written work is mostly at the expected standard and, in a few cases, at a very high standard. Students' practical work is of a good standard. For example, in craft, students learn how to design, measure and create bird boxes, tables and signs for use in the gardens. Some of these items are sold as part of the enterprise programme. Students studying horticulture have designed a high-quality sensory garden for the college and painted picnic benches that enhance the environment.
- Students can articulate the skills they have acquired and the knowledge they have gained. They value the good progress they make with English and numeracy skills. They are proud of their ability to measure accurately and understand the importance of health and safety; for example, a student learned how to change a tyre to meet health and safety requirements during work experience at a garage.
- Students are well prepared for independence. They can explain how they can now look after themselves more effectively, for example by making an omelette and cleaning their bedroom. They look forward to living in the community.
- Students enjoy their learning and taking part in the wide range of exciting activities. They make friends and are well prepared for adulthood.
- The majority of students move on to employment, internships or further education. Almost a third of students who left last year are now living in shared or supported accommodation. Students make good progress into employment, education and training. Over half of students who left last year returned to their family home with improved levels of independence.
- Managers do not analyse achievement data sufficiently for them to determine any variation in the achievement rates of different groups of students. Managers record student destination data but not in enough detail for them to carry out meaningful analysis to bring about further improvements.

Provider details

Unique reference number	131947
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of students	16–19+
Approximate number of all students over the previous full contract year	54
Principal/CEO	Kelly Rowlands
Telephone number	01626 864066
Website	http://oakwoodcourt.ac.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 students (excluding apprenticeships)	27	28	–	1	–	–	–	–
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 students aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of students for which the provider receives high-needs funding	56							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	–							

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 inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students 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

Penny Mathers, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tracey Zimmerman	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kate Brennan	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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