

# Brentwood Community College

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

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**Unique reference number:** 142914

**Name of lead inspector:** Suzanne Wainwright, HMI

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**Type of provider:** Independent specialist college

**Address:** Cherry Lane  
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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Brentwood Community College was inspected in July 2018. 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 rectifying the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Brentwood College is located in Sale, Greater Manchester. It was established in 2014 as a result of the local area special educational needs review for students aged over 19 who were progressing from the associated special school. It was registered formally as a company limited by guarantee and a specialist post-16 institution in 2016. The college provides education and support for students who have severe learning difficulties, profound learning difficulties and/or autism spectrum condition (ASC). At the time of the monitoring visit, 17 students attended the college.

### Themes

**What progress have teachers made in ensuring that they plan lessons and learning activities that take into account students' needs, starting points and ambitions, and enable students to make the progress of which they are capable?**

**Reasonable progress**

Teachers ensure that they now plan teaching, learning and assessment more effectively to meet the individual needs and ambitions of students. They identify appropriate individual learning targets for students from their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Leaders, managers and teachers monitor the progress students make against their targets regularly and accurately through half-termly reviews, using their new recording and monitoring system. These reviews inform directly the annual review of students' EHC plans.

The vast majority of students make at least the progress expected of them against their targets. A small minority of students do not make sufficient progress due to changes in their health and behaviour. Leaders and managers effectively moderate their judgements on students' progress by consulting the views of independent external partners. They receive helpful and constructive feedback that supports the further development of their new approach to progress monitoring.

Leaders and managers develop effective partnerships with external agencies to provide high-quality community activities for students. Teachers work successfully with partner staff to provide learning that takes account of students' starting points and individual targets. For example, students attend a local college for gym sessions. Teachers share students' individual targets and behavioural plans regularly with the

college students and staff who deliver the sessions. They encourage students to choose what they do next and to identify when they have done enough. Students learn quickly to follow instructions. Over the past two terms, students have improved the amount of time they spend on the treadmill, rowing machine, cycle and cross-trainer. They use the equipment safely and are improving their health and well-being noticeably.

Teachers and teaching assistants manage students' behaviour skilfully and sensitively. Staff ensure that all students and staff are safe when incidents occur. They deal with incidents swiftly and quickly and ensure that students are supported to become calm. While students have effective behaviour plans, managers have not yet included targets for behaviour within students' individual education plans.

Managers and teachers do not record information about students' starting points formally enough at the start of students' time at the college. While students have a four-week assessment at the start of their programmes, the outcomes of these assessments are informal. Too often, managers and teachers rely on the information that they receive from the students' previous school to establish their starting points.

In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not plan the start of sessions effectively enough. Staff use symbols in the classroom to identify what the students will do in their practical sessions and what equipment they will need. However, these symbols do not always reflect accurately the equipment provided in the practical session. As a result, students are unable to relate the classroom preparation to the practical work they undertake.

In a small number of lessons, teachers discuss their expectations of students and students' targets with the teaching assistant but not with the student. As a result, the student is not made aware of their targets. On a very few occasions, teaching assistants intervene too quickly and complete the task for the student.

In a small minority of lessons, oral feedback to students from staff is cursory and insufficiently detailed. Staff use praise, such as 'good sitting', 'good waiting', 'good listening', but do not ensure that students know what they have done successfully, what they need to do the next time, or how they can improve their work.

**What progress have leaders, managers and governors made in establishing robust quality assurance and monitoring arrangements that enable them to evaluate accurately the quality of the provision and make rapid improvements?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have improved quality assurance arrangements sufficiently. They have identified clearly in the quality improvement plan (QIP) what their key priorities are to improve the quality of the provision. They can articulate the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and the impact that their actions have

had over the past two terms. These improvements were evident during the monitoring visit.

The self-assessment report is not sufficiently evaluative. While it identifies strengths and priority areas for development, as detailed in the QIP, associated statements are too descriptive or are simply quotations from the inspection report. The QIP, while insightful and an improvement on the QIP provided for the full inspection, does not record sufficiently the impact that actions have on improving the quality of the provision.

Leaders and managers have a much better understanding of the post-19 provision than they did at the full inspection. They discuss key aspects of the provision regularly and identify relevant actions to rectify areas of weakness or concern. However, the impact of actions resulting from senior leadership meetings is not evaluated sufficiently at the subsequent meeting. As a result, it is unclear whether leaders and managers make improvements to the quality of the provision as rapidly as they could.

Leaders have implemented successfully new processes to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They use the outcomes of lesson observations effectively to evaluate the performance of teachers and support staff. After an observation or learning walk, teachers receive action points to complete. Their progress against these actions contributes to their appraisal targets and is reviewed through regular meetings with their managers. Peer observation is particularly useful in helping teachers and teaching assistants to improve their practices. As well as identifying areas for development, the process serves to identify areas of good practice that are shared subsequently across the organisation at training events. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved.

Leaders have strengthened governance arrangements significantly. The new college board is monitoring quality improvement arrangements more effectively. While the new board has only held two formal meetings since its introduction in September 2018, records and discussions with board representatives demonstrate that they hold leaders and managers to account effectively for the progress they are making with specific improvements. The board has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Board members have appropriate skills and enthusiasm for their roles. However, they have not yet received training for their governance roles.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in implementing an effective curriculum offer that meets the needs and abilities of all students and sets high expectations across all aspects of students' learning?**      **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have reviewed the curriculum successfully to ensure that it meets the needs and abilities of students. It focuses on students' preparation for,

and progress into, adulthood, including, where appropriate, work experience or work-related activities. Leaders and managers are now clear on the demarcation between the school curriculum and the college curriculum. They have sought advice from external partners, such as Manchester United Foundation and United Response, to help establish greater access to work-related and community activities. Leaders have benefited from visits to other independent specialist colleges to observe good practice. They have reviewed the staffing of a small number of vocational subjects to ensure that the staff are appropriately qualified to deliver in these specialist subject areas. Timetables are individualised and sufficiently flexible to meet the changing needs of each student.

Leaders have invested significantly in providing a more appropriate curriculum for young people aged 19 and over. They ensure that they provide appropriate resources so that students can access community activities regularly. Leaders confirmed that they have now secured additional future funding from the local authority to ensure that they can maintain this approach on a long-term basis. This was a concern at the previous inspection. Leaders provide students with a choice of internal enrichment activities. External activities include use of the gym, bowling, badminton and community dancing. Eleven students benefited from a highly successful residential visit to an outdoor activity centre that helped them to develop team-building skills, as well as greater confidence and self-esteem.

The curriculum includes opportunities for students to develop further life and independence skills in different contexts. For example, swimming supports health and well-being, but also helps students to practise life skills, such as dressing and undressing. Staff discuss regularly with parents and carers the activities that students continue to do at home, such as preparing their own meals.

The curriculum requires further development to ensure that it supports students to progress into the most appropriate setting for their needs and ambitions. At the time of the monitoring visit, it was unclear how effectively or regularly leaders and managers review the curriculum to ensure that it provides the most appropriate long-term outcomes for all students. The small number of students who have left the college have progressed into local authority social care. Governors are rightly concerned that not all students move into the most meaningful destination to meet their needs and abilities. Governors are currently undertaking their own research to find out how they can ensure the most suitable destinations for all students.

**How successfully do students develop their English and mathematical skills to help them gain greater independence and improve their social skills?** **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers identify effectively the levels of students' English and mathematical skills when they start at the college. They use this information effectively to set targets for most students to help them to improve their English and mathematical skills. However, managers and teachers do not retain a record of the

early assessments of students' English and mathematical skills. While teachers set targets based on these assessments that show students' incremental progress in developing their English and mathematical skills, no actual record of students' starting points exists to show students' progress over time.

Managers and teachers plan the curriculum effectively to ensure that students improve their English and mathematical skills through everyday tasks and activities. For example, students take part each morning in a one-kilometre walk. A few students use a pedometer to record and count their steps. This activity supports their healthy living targets and helps to develop their numeracy skills. Students who work in the college cafe complete written shopping lists accurately. They identify the correct money needed for shopping, buy the correct items on their lists and keep account of the cafe's sales and takings accurately.

Teachers plan learning activities to ensure that students with limited or non-verbal communication skills can convey their preferences and interests independently. For example, students use tablets and other communication devices, such as 'switches', to communicate preferences in music sessions. Students use their switches to ask for the same music to be repeated or request changes to the music being played. They make choices, take turns and improve their social skills in small groups.

Leaders and managers identify staff who need support to improve their English and mathematical skills. They provide effective support for staff who have learning needs, such as dyslexia. Leaders have improved their recruitment practices for new staff and for those applying for a promotion to ensure that they have good English and mathematical skills. A few teaching assistants are undertaking an apprenticeship in supporting teaching and learning in schools, which includes an English and mathematics module. Teachers benefit from specific training that helps them to identify opportunities in lessons to apply functional English and mathematics. As a result, students develop their skills in these subjects further.

A minority of teachers do not provide students with the feedback they need to improve their spelling of common words. Too often, students repeat these mistakes.

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