

ROC College (part of United Response)

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates

12–14 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers promote high aspirations for learners. As a result, learners make good progress from their starting points.
- Senior leaders use their skills and experience very effectively to challenge and support managers. Managers are quick to make improvements.
- Staff skilfully design and deliver very effective personalised learning and development programmes. Learners make good progress and gain accredited qualifications.
- Learners develop useful skills that employers value. Work placements often lead to paid employment.
- Learners develop positive attitudes to learning and many make better-than-expected progress towards independence.
- Managers and staff are very creative, are highly motivated and enjoy their work. They manage the complex needs of learners very effectively.
- Managers regularly review the quality of teaching, learning and assessment but they do not do so comprehensively.
- Managers do not have a simple system that allows learners, parents, carers and staff to gauge the knowledge, skills and behaviours learners achieve.
- Learners do not receive sufficient impartial information, advice and guidance in order to make realistic plans for their futures.

Full report

Information about the provider

- ROC has operated as an independent specialist college of further education for young people since June 2012. It is based in Totnes, Devon. In April 2017, it merged with United Response, a charity that provides personalised care and support to people with learning disabilities and mental health needs. ROC provides programmes of learning, including work opportunities, for learners and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in Devon and Cornwall. It offers supported traineeships and internships as steps towards paid or voluntary employment.
- Learners have mild to severe learning disabilities and a few have complex medical needs. Learners are working at or below level 1 of the National Qualification Framework. The college operates as a virtual college in Torbay, Exeter, Exmouth and Cornwall. Most of the learning takes place at ROC's own specialist provision or in the community, using venues such as libraries and leisure centres. At the time of the inspection, 17 learners were attending the college. The college works mostly with local authorities in the south-west of England.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the system for recording the knowledge, skills and behaviours learners achieve so that it is easy to see the progress they have made.
- Ensure that learners have sufficient access to impartial information, advice and guidance so that they can make realistic plans for their careers and future lives.
- Improve systems to check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that:
 - staff understand the impact their teaching has on learning
 - areas for further development are identified and, where appropriate, lead to personalised action plans for staff so that they know what to do to improve their practice.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- ROC's leaders have overseen and managed a successful merger with United Response since the previous inspection. The partnership and relationship between United Response leaders and ROC staff have led to benefits for learners, such as specialist support for reviewing safeguarding and help with arranging learners' accommodation.
- Staff value the regular supervision and effective professional training they receive. They appreciate the way managers make themselves available to discuss and resolve concerns and communicate good practice.
- Over the past three years, leaders have successfully more than doubled the number of learners while maintaining a culture of highly individualised training and development programmes.
- Leaders skilfully promote a culture that respects learners' individual rights. Managers have been successful in recruiting learning guides who provide one-to-one daily support to learners and share the college's values and ambitions. Staff motivate learners to achieve new skills very effectively.
- Managers design the curriculum and align programmes of learning carefully, linking them to the outcomes in learners' education, health and care (EHC) plans. Staff have high aspirations for learners. They challenge and support them to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills that help them to progress to employment and independent living.
- Managers and staff are innovative in their practice and have been successful at introducing traineeships that prepare learners for work. Staff work closely with learners to plan internships that meet their interests. Two supported internships are planned to start in September 2019.
- Managers work in productive partnerships with many external local organisations, including emergency services and national organisations, to organise and facilitate community events. These provide learners with useful opportunities to become aware of the importance of community life.
- Managers have developed valuable partnerships with large- and small-scale employers who provide good work placement opportunities that meet learners' needs and interests. Employers speak highly of how effectively ROC staff communicate with them.
- Managers promote fundamental British values thoroughly. Staff do not tolerate discriminatory behaviour. Staff and learners have a good rapport and learners help and look after one another.
- Managers are very enthusiastic and keen to improve their professional practice. Managers have recently created an English and mathematics strategy and an observation of teaching, learning and assessment strategy, and have also made improvements to the mid-course review record. They are very quick to make improvements once the need has been recognised.
- Managers and staff promote the development of learners' English and mathematics skills effectively in other subjects and activities. They also arrange specific sessions that

improve learners' English and mathematical skills. However, managers recognise that they do not promote the achievement of English and mathematics qualifications sufficiently. They are working to rectify this but, at the time of the inspection, it was too early to see the impact of their new strategy.

- Managers have not created a system that easily captures the incremental steps learners make in gaining new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Learners, staff and parents have difficulty gauging the progress learners have made.
- Managers do not review the quality of teaching, learning and assessment thoroughly enough. They do not focus sufficiently on the impact that teaching has on learning. The areas for improvement they identify do not lead to action plans. As a result, staff are unclear what they need to do to improve and their practice is not improving as quickly as it could.

The governance of the provider

- Senior leaders in United Response carefully monitor the provision through the use of well-established systems. Managers collect and submit useful and accurate performance data regularly. United Response's senior leaders provide very effective challenge and support to managers that lead to improvements in practice. Senior leaders understand ROC College's strengths and weaknesses. They use their expertise to question managers' practice and provide valuable support on safeguarding, on housing matters and in securing tenancies for learners.
- ROC leaders have recognised and responded well to the need for a separate governance process for ROC College. They have defined specific roles for new governors and are clear about the responsibilities under the new governance arrangements. It is too soon to see the impact of the new board because it has not yet met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders' understanding of safeguarding has strengthened. A strong ethos of safeguarding runs through the organisation, with clear lines of accountability. Designated officers are trained and knowledgeable. They maintain good links with the local authorities and the police.
- Staff introduce safeguarding to learners effectively during the induction period. Learners know how to stay safe online. They know where to go if there is a fire and to whom to report any safeguarding concerns. Staff check the health and safety aspects of work placements carefully and complete thorough risk assessments.
- Managers report on safeguarding on a monthly basis to senior leaders within United Response. Managers routinely discuss safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty at managers' meetings and this leads to improvements in practice.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff are appropriately qualified and have relevant experience. Staff use their knowledge effectively to plan and deliver good-quality training and development. Learning guides are skilled at enabling learners to develop new skills at their work placements.
- Managers and staff work effectively with local authorities, schools, therapists and psychologists. They use the information they gain about new learners very effectively to plan and provide them with a smooth transition into the college. Learners who have had behavioural difficulties in other establishments quickly become calm and settle to learning at ROC College.
- Staff create individualised programmes that are linked closely to accredited qualifications, enrichment activities and work opportunities that lead to the achievement of outcomes in EHC plans. Staff engage learners in identifying and realising their aspirations. Learners enjoy their learning and are highly motivated to achieve.
- Staff challenge learners appropriately. Staff are adept at using questioning techniques that develop learners' employability, independence and problem-solving skills. They recognise the importance of developing learner autonomy and find strategies that successfully meet learners' interests.
- Staff provide interesting activities that develop learners' moral and spiritual development. Learners complete excellent conservation work. For example, they make bug hotels, check on bird nesting, complete bird surveys and place wildlife cameras in rural settings.
- Staff work hard to provide the specific service learners need. They recently learned British Sign Language to better support learners who have hearing difficulties. Most staff use sign language very effectively to inform, guide and support learners.
- Learning guides provide effective teaching, learning and assessment so that learners progress well from their starting points. Staff carry out detailed assessments, using previous reports, that accurately identify learners' abilities and build on prior attainment. They know the learners very well and provide appropriate levels of support that prepare them effectively for their next steps.
- Staff help learners with their English and mathematics skills by effectively introducing them into other subjects. For example, learners count the number of exercises they repeat in gym sessions. They are motivated and improve their use of numbers.
- Learners learn new words and write simple sentences because staff encourage them to write about things they like. They know the skills they need to prepare them for their future lives. They learn how to complete forms, handle money, buy bus tickets and open bank accounts.
- Staff support learners by building their independence, removing barriers and maximising opportunities. Learners are supported well to take part in activities such as creative and performing arts, horticulture, metal work, animal husbandry, woodwork, leisure and fitness, digital skills and independent living skills. Learners increase their social interactions, learn to live healthier lives and develop leadership skills.
- Staff are skilled at networking and use community events and job fairs to develop good relationships that benefit learners. They support employers and learners effectively. Learners enjoy work experiences that complement their learning.

- Staff do not clearly record the incremental steps that learners make towards achieving the outcomes identified in their EHC plans. Records of progress mid-way through courses do not always detail what learners need to do to improve. A few learners are unclear about their learning goals and are not making sufficiently rapid progress according to their abilities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners gain confidence during their time at the college. Employers value the contributions learners make to their businesses. Employers have high regard for the learners and give them encouraging feedback.
- Learners work hard, complete tasks to a high standard and are pleased with their accomplishments. Learners develop high levels of self-esteem and are motivated to succeed.
- Learners demonstrate good communication skills with peers, staff and employers. They learn how to take turns and work cooperatively with others.
- Learners gain a good understanding of health and safety. They understand the importance of keeping themselves and others safe, for example by reporting and clearing up spillages efficiently and understanding fire procedures.
- Learners feel safe at college and also in their work placements. They know who to talk to if they have safeguarding concerns and are confident they will be listened to. Learners have appropriate levels of understanding about how to stay safe online, remain healthy and form positive relationships.
- Learners understand their rights and responsibilities as learners and also as citizens. They have good attendance at college and in work placements. Learners develop good social skills, make friends and learn to interact in community settings such as leisure centres.
- Learners on traineeships undertake online training in safety at work, food hygiene and manual handling. Employers appreciate the understanding learners have of health and safety and the way they apply it in the workplace.
- Learners have a positive attitude to all aspects of their learning and are respectful to staff, employers and peers. Learners are polite and demonstrate positive behaviours relevant to being in the community or in work placements. For example, learners with a hearing impairment have become confident in communicating and supporting customers within the retail industry, for example asking them if they need help with finding products.
- Learners research and choose many of their own additional activities. These include camping, visits to the gym, yoga, dancing, driving lessons and an annual games event. Learners enjoy cooking and sewing lessons where they develop useful skills for life. They know the importance of exercise and making healthy food choices.
- Learners are knowledgeable about job opportunities in different sectors. They understand the importance of patience, clear communication and the ability to keep calm when working in retail or care environments.

- Learners develop their communication skills effectively. They improve their ability to use sign language and become confident in talking to members of the public. They are able to request help and find out information when travelling.
- Learners do not receive sufficient impartial information, advice and guidance from staff throughout their learning programmes. As a result, a minority of learners do not have realistic plans for their futures. However, managers have recently arranged externally provided information, advice and guidance to help learners plan for their next steps in more detail and this will take place routinely.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Learners make good progress from their starting points. Learners enjoy learning and make progress relative to their potential. Most learners improve their ability to communicate and express their views.
- Most learners undertake work experience and develop valuable skills that are useful in gaining employment. They are prepared effectively for the workplace and understand employers are looking for staff who are clean and polite, arrive on time and carry out tasks to a high standard.
- Learners become ready for employment through carefully planned traineeships. A few learners are planning to start internships that are specifically designed to meet their interests in September this year. Staff plan internships carefully to lead to paid employment but it is too soon to judge their impact.
- All learners are developing good skills that increase their independence. The majority of learners learn to travel independently by bus and train and a few learn to drive. They are well prepared for their next steps and value the way their new skills have widened their choices and changed their lives.
- Learners' achievement of qualifications linked to employability skills is good. Most learners achieve qualifications in a range of skills, including fire safety, food hygiene, animal care, employability skills and independent living. Learners working in the care sector gain a health and social care qualification.
- The large majority of learners go on to employment or further training and a few secure paid employment. Learners are empowered to make a positive move from their family home into living in the community. They experience a sense of fulfilment and improved health and well-being.
- Parents are delighted at how their young people make such good progress. They report significant improvements in their confidence and independence. Several parents stated that progress would not have been so fast without the support of ROC staff.
- Learners improve their numeracy and literacy skills effectively through the planned activities. However, only a small proportion of learners gain meaningful qualifications in English and mathematics.

Provider details

Unique reference number	145154
Type of provider	Independent special
Age range of learners	16–19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	17
Principal/CEO	Therese Timberlake
Telephone number	01803 868 550
Website	www.unitedresponse.org.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)	5	12	-	-	-	-	-	-
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			
	2		2		4			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	1							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	17							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the headteacher, 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 learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions and assessments. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Penny Mathers, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Gillian Paterson	Ofsted Inspector

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