

Victoria College

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

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Type of provider: Independent specialist college

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Victoria College was inspected in May 2022. 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 resolving the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Victoria College is an independent specialist college based in Birmingham. It is part of the Victoria School and Cherry Oak Federation. The college currently has 36 students aged 19 to 25 with profound and multiple learning disabilities. The curriculum is based on preparing students for adulthood and includes employment, independent living, community inclusion, and health subjects. Students are placed in one of three groups, dependant on their disability. The sensory group supports students with profound disabilities and significant challenges with communication. The middle group supports students with a greater capacity to engage in learning. Finally, the higher group supports students who are progressing towards employment and supported living.

Students have access to a range of therapies, including hydrotherapy, rebound therapy, speech and language therapy and music therapy. They also have access to dance and sports.

Themes

What progress have leaders made in the continued development and implementation of the curriculum to prepare students for adulthood, including the relationship, personal, health and sex education (RPHSE) curriculum, to ensure that students are prepared to move on to their next steps outside of the college?

Reasonable progress

Following the previous inspection, leaders completed a comprehensive review of the curriculum. They have implemented three pathways of learning, based on the level of students, as determined by their baseline assessment, which is completed at the start of their course. This allows teachers to plan challenging teaching activities that are suitable for all the students in the group. As a result, students are supported to develop their skills to a level that is in line with their physical abilities and their learning needs.

Teachers deliver the new RPHSE curriculum effectively. They plan activities to engage students according to their learning abilities. For example, in the middle

group, students are encouraged to identify the difference between males and females by using educational dolls, while students in the higher group use 'choice cards' to identify these. As a result, students learn new skills, such as being able to make appropriate choices.

Leaders have started to implement a more ambitious careers programme. They concentrate careers activities into one week per term. Leaders have designed a curriculum that provides a range of activities for students that are relevant to their next steps. For example, teachers plan employer-led activities, such as building bug houses with a large construction company. Careers talks with, for example, a large pharmaceutical company are also planned. As a result, regardless of the likelihood of students progressing into paid employment, they gain a greater awareness of the world of work.

Leaders and managers have updated the enrichment curriculum since the previous inspection. They provide students with longer-term developmental activities, which gives them the opportunity to develop the skills required for adulthood. These include committing to longer-term projects, such as the college orchestra and the student council.

Leaders are in the initial stages of mapping students' skills targets identified in baseline activities to the wider college activities, such as careers weeks and community visits. As a result, while participating in these activities, a few students are not supported to further develop their skills against the set targets.

What progress have leaders made in ensuring that they use baseline assessments more effectively, to identify clear learning goals to ensure that students can achieve their best?

Reasonable progress

Teachers use the information in students' education, health and care plans, as well as video evidence taken when they start at the college, to generate a baseline assessment for each student, to inform their individual targets. However, these targets are not yet specific enough to ensure that students make swift progress in their studies. Teachers do not always identify smaller goals, to fully support planning of learning and to ensure that students develop their skills as quickly as they are able.

Teachers and the clinical team closely monitor the progress of students to ensure they remain on track. They frequently review the progress of students against their education, health and care targets. Where students have achieved a target, they are set additional targets to develop more complex skills. For example, students who develop the ability to get a toothbrush to their mouth independently are then supported to learn how to put toothpaste on the brush so that they can clean their teeth.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have invested in a new online tracking system to record and monitor students' progress against their targets. They use targets based on students' baseline assessments to track their progress. Summary reports enable leaders to monitor student progress and identify any areas of concern, such as specific groups of students who are not achieving their targets. Access to this information enables leaders to quickly put in place plans to get students back on track.

What progress have leaders made to ensure that teachers engage more capable students in lessons more quickly so that teachers maximise the opportunities for students to develop their knowledge and skills? Reasonable progress

Leaders use the information they have on students to match them with the support and curriculum that they need. They ensure that students are placed into appropriate groups - sensory, middle and higher. The development of these pathways allows teachers to plan their teaching to ensure that students progress more quickly. Teachers ensure that students take part in challenging learning that is based on their starting points. As a result, they develop the skills they need for life after college.

Although leaders and teachers place students into one of the three pathways at the start of their course, they have designed the curriculum to enable students to move between groups during their course. Teachers match students to lessons that best reflect their starting points in the different topics within the curriculum. For example, where teachers have identified that students in the higher group would benefit from accessing RPHSE curriculum for the middle group, teachers support them to do so. This ensures that students develop the skills and knowledge they need at the level that best suits their needs.

Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively in class to support all students in sessions. They plan the use of resources well to meet the needs of students, such as signing and using different flash cards and resources appropriate to the learning needs of students. As a result, students participate well in sessions and develop their skills in line with their starting points.

Leaders have not yet fully rectified the initial morning session as students arrive in college in order to engage more capable students quickly at the beginning of the day. While the most able students are set additional tasks, such as being asked to identify the day and date, these additional tasks are not always sufficient to engage them during the settling-in period. Consequently, a few students still have periods of inactivity when they could be further practising the skills they have developed.

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