

Inclusion in Employment

Weston College



What the Judges Said

It was impressive to read about a setting putting their money where their mouth is and employing their former students. The judges were impressed with the use of apprenticeships, the support and sustainability of the model. It will be interesting to hear how a new leader changes this programme.

Context

Weston College is an Ofsted outstanding college of further and higher education in Weston-super-Mare. It provides education and vocational training to nearly 30,000 learners across the country.

When the College began its provision for learners with SEND in 1981, it lacked visibility, being disconnected from the main site with just eight enrolments. This has grown to 1078 Further Education learners (502 with High Needs) and 153 Higher Education learners receiving various levels of learning support within the College. Currently, the College is the largest provider of *Additional Learning Support* and *High Needs* funding in the country.

In 2013, the College was rated '*Outstanding*' by Ofsted. In 2015, the College was judged to be both the *College of the Year* and *Overall Further Education Provider of the Year* at the Times Educational Supplement Further Education (TES FE) awards.

The ethos at the college is to put the learner first, staff are entrepreneurial in approach and innovative in thinking. As a college, staff are ambitious and aspirational being responsive to the needs of students, staff, businesses and the community.

The College has created world class facilities delivering aspirational provision to over 1000 learners that require additional support. Results are consistently above national benchmarks, with an impressive 92% of all learners with SEND progressing into employment or further learning including 17% who have transitioned into higher education.

Driven by strong leadership from the very top, empowerment and personalisation of learner journeys is at the heart of the strategic plans. The college has received national/international recognition for its pioneering provision and its success has also contributed to new revenue contracts being won, enabling its best practice to be extended to improve outcomes for other disadvantaged/disaffected learner groups e.g. NEET, offenders, the long term unemployed.

The college is particularly proud of its innovative “specialist support model” and person-centred ethos; its ground-breaking autism work; its holistic approach with learners with profound and complex need and its foundation degree development (inclusive practice) to future proof “talent” and upskill its workforce. It is exemplar practice which demonstrates how staff, learners and stakeholders (including employers) have worked together to “value people” and to create inclusive social mobility for learners.

Entry

The “Into Work” programme has one primary aim which is to support young people to move into paid employment. There are currently 10 learners within the “Into Work” programme and the course is expected to be 1 year long.

The college embeds the core values from the National Occupational Standards for Supported Employment and aims to:

- Equip interns with the skills they need for work, through learning in the workplace

- Where interns do not transition into paid work, ensure relevant agencies are able to continue job searching and employment support
- Work in close partnership with all partners to ensure optimal opportunity to paid employment

The inclusive programmes of study are delivered by professionally qualified and specialist LDD staff which aim to instil self-belief and confidence in interns. The staff work in partnership with families, interns and employers. All programmes are inclusive and sessions or work placements are differentiated to meet the individual needs and learning level.

Evidence to support our “above and beyond” delivery:

A learner centred approach uses the college setting and disability confident employers to allow an intern to reach their potential within work placement, towards paid employment. The college operates a flexible approach to meeting individual needs. A student may follow elements from more than one course or spend time outside his or her own year group. The College uses a computerised register system that tracks intern’s attendance to their college sessions and a time sheet for the intern to use to log their attendance to their internship placement.

Throughout the year learners gather a portfolio of evidence by completing a vocational profile, development plan, work placement diaries, CV’s, employability and vocational assignments. This can then be used as a transition pack when they finish their internship for future job searching and supported employment work.

Central to the delivery of English and Maths development is to embed these essential day-to-day skills into their work placement and for interns to realise the relevance of these skills. Initial and mid-term assessments focus on how learners are practicing their English and Maths development sessions and the levels they are working towards. These skills can then be reinforced and embedded in their work placements and any vocational sessions they may do. Regular meetings are also held to review the effectiveness of individual’s targets and strategies.

The college assesses learners against non-accredited learning using the 5 stage process for Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA including):

1. Clearly stated aims appropriate to an individual learner or groups of learners
2. Initial assessment to establish the learner's starting point
3. Identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives: initial, renegotiated and revised
4. Recognition and recording of progress and achievement during programmes (formative assessment): feedback to learners, learner reflection, tutorials
5. End-of-programme learner self-assessment; tutor summative assessment; review of overall progress and achievement

The college offers a **positive experience** to an employer – even with Work Experience. We treat them like a customer. We want them to continue to work with us.

The college works hard to recruit and train job coaches to ensure that they are using specific supported employment techniques. Every learner is assigned a skilled and trained job coach that both understands the learner's needs and the employer's requirements. The college has a rigorous job matching process ensuring learners vocational profile and employer requirements can create a job match – we then fill the skills gap with our training programmes and job coaching model.

Case Studies and Impact 2017:

The college builds and maintains strong relationships with employers, this is integral to the successes seen. *“We have been impressed with the transitional support offered by the College for students with additional needs entering employment with us – the College recognises that it is not just getting the job, we are all interested in sustainable careers and the College will always offer advice and guidance on inclusive strategies to help our employees develop – long after they have started with us.”* Tesco (employer locally).

The 'Into Work' programme for 16-24 year olds with SEND, (through extensive relationship building with supportive employers) has been incredibly successful with 100% success rates – 55% progressing into higher level work based learning and 45% of learners securing paid employment, which dramatically exceeds the national average of 6% of people with learning disabilities in paid employment.

Ben

When Ben started on the Into Work Programme two years ago, he had a very limited social network, low confidence, limited independent living skills and was very anxious about being alone in case of a seizure. Throughout his time at college he worked extremely hard with college staff to develop the skills required to achieve his dream of working with young children and gain a GCSE English grade C. Ben completed internships with Dunelm and Castle Kids Club where he gained long-lasting confidence, lifelong friendships and sustainable paid employment opportunities. Through his hard work and determination to overcome his barriers Ben successfully achieved a grade C in English, a paid job at Dunelm and a Level 2 Apprenticeship with Castle Kids Club.

“I Have gained long lasting confidence, lifelong friendships and sustainable paid employment.”

Kyle

Kyle started college with the Westhaven Post 16 Link Programme, then progressing through Preparation for Work and Life and Extension Studies to begin the Into Work Programme two years ago. When he first started his confidence was low, communication was limited and ambitions were unclear. However, through multiple placements Kyle showed a passion for practical work and gained an Internship with the Weston College Facilities Team. After 18 months of hard work and specialist job coaching Kyle’s confidence and communication skills have developed significantly and he has been successful in attaining a Level 2 Apprenticeship position within the Facilities Team.

“My confidence and communication skills have developed significantly and I have succeeded in becoming an apprentice”