

# Inclusion in Further Education

Oldham College

## What the Judges Said

We felt that this was a well-evidenced entry with data and supporting documentation backing up every point. The approach is college-wide, not just a focus on SEND or additional needs.

## Context

Oldham College is an ambitious and inclusive college, which is proud to be a unique provider of technical and professional education in Oldham.

We are in an area with more challenges than many other regional and national areas in terms of deprivation (56% across Oldham) and education and skills levels (only 56% at Level 2 or above in Oldham). The levels of deprivation across the borough are ranked among the highest in the country.

The College has students from over 50 countries, speaking over 50 different languages with almost half of the College population coming from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

The number of learners in Oldham's schools achieving five GCSEs at grades 9 to 4, including maths and English, although improving, is below the national rate.

Just under half of all learners enter the college without having achieved any qualifications in English and mathematics.

The College has historically played an important role in Oldham around community cohesion, through the environment which it fosters on the campus and in terms of its wider community work. This work is part of the role that the College sees itself as being an "anchor institution" within the locality, which is developed through its participation in the Oldham Leadership Board and a range of other partnerships. This role is all the more important given the extremely high proportion of learners who are disadvantaged.

The linkages between deprivation, social mobility and educational attainment in Oldham are currently the focus of a Department of Education **Opportunity Area** initiative. They include the prevalence of low skills, low prior achievement and the interconnection between these and other complex issues, such as mental health,

drug and alcohol misuse, worklessness and similar challenges. The disproportionate levels of deprivation associated with Oldham College learners are accompanied by disproportionate levels of the issues attached to this: including a full range of safeguarding and support issues, forced marriage, domestic violence, crime, drug and alcohol misuse, mental health and self-harm, lack of confidence, language, social isolation and poverty.

In a town of low opportunity and high disadvantage, the College works with those who experience this most acutely.

For all of these reasons, the College is a unique provision within the town. It is the only genuinely inclusive post-16 provider, willing to provide “second chance” and new opportunities for both young and adult learners. It is also the only provider with a curriculum closely aligned with the main employment and growth sectors in the Greater Manchester labour market. The College has also worked hard to ensure that it can offer an “escalator” curriculum, which provides the right mix of pathways for learners to start in one place but arrive at the outcome they need to enter the labour market in their chosen field.

**‘Leaders and managers have developed highly effective partnerships with employers, the local authority, schools and the community. They work with partners to plan and develop courses that are responsive to local needs and skills priorities for Oldham, as well as opportunities within the wider region of Greater Manchester. For example, they have worked recently with the local council to provide apprenticeships in horticulture to meet identified skills gaps.’ Ofsted, 2018**

In December 2018, Ofsted graded the College ‘good’ overall and “good” in all nine categories. Learner behaviour was described as “**exemplary**” and staff were praised for their professional expertise, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the excellent support provided for individuals.

The College is able to show many examples of success for learners during the last two years. Last year alone we supported a group of 29 high risks learners who we worked with prior to enrolment to ensure that their time with us would be successful, through to strong outcomes for over 1,000 apprentices, 600 undergraduates, 2,000 16-18 year olds and 1,000 adults. The College delivers a very wide range of provision, from degrees to entry level provision, English for Speakers of Other

languages and a range of technical and professional pathways aligned with the economy.

Student satisfaction is very high and learners report feeling extremely safe at the College.

The College has a very good “high needs” provision and excellent special needs support.

Oldham College is an inclusive organisation, which works with learners of all abilities and backgrounds, and provides a set of pathways to improve life and work skills and prepare students for the labour market or further study.

As one of our parents said, in response to the publication of our Ofsted report:

**“My daughter has attended Oldha College since September (school leaver) and in my opinion the College is outstanding. The ethos of the College is about so much more than just obtaining the qualifications. We see a much more confident and happy girl every day.”**

## **Entry**

Oldham College has developed a culture where **every Leader is a Leader of SEND** and **every Teacher is a Teacher of SEND**. An innovative **Additional Learning Support (ALS) Handbook** (Evidence 1) has been developed to ensure that every member of staff across College understands and takes responsibility for supporting students with special educational needs. Monthly training sessions for staff take place to ensure each department understands their obligations towards working with SEND students. As a result of this training refectory staff understand the need to pre-plan and promote meal choices ahead of the day and have changed their service times to enable students with mobility difficulties to access the food counter and make their own food choices; the IT department prioritise IT requests from the ALS team as they now understand that learning can be restricted for SEND students unless the appropriate assistive technology is in place; SEND students have an active voice across College and become involved with participating in a vast array of activities; students studying Hair and Beauty and Barbering, are developing skills in how to work with customers that may have anxieties around having their hair cut – they attend monthly sessions with SEND students and offer them beauty and pampering sessions with the eventual aim of encouraging students to have their hair cut. These are a few examples of how the College has raised the bar with their inclusive ethos, and how students and staff across College now work together to support students with SEND.

**‘Staff and learners embrace and promote equality of opportunity and celebrate diversity. Staff are highly qualified and experienced in working with learners with high needs. They have specific subject knowledge and behaviour support skills that ensure that learners participate fully in lessons and make good progress. Tutors and support staff benefit from a range of training and resources to enable them to effectively support the learning, social and healthcare needs of learners with high needs.’ Ofsted, 2018**

Detailed formal/informal and assessment processes are in place to ensure that the correct CEIAG and level of programme is offered to each individual. Potential students are invited into college for taster assessment sessions as often as is deemed necessary to ensure a smooth transition. As part of this transition they visit the classrooms and specialist areas they will visit when at College and meet with key staff which helps reduce any anxieties around transition. Some students attend weekly sessions for a number of weeks prior to joining the College. **‘Highly effective transition arrangements’** were noted as a key strength by Ofsted in December 2018.

**“Sophie attended Oldham College weekly for a few months, to get her prepared for moving to College and reduce her anxieties; this has made the transition much easier. Sophie still has times where she feels anxious, but the College know how to support her to reduce the anxieties to a manageable level, she’s growing in confidence every single day which is delightful to see” (Sophie H’s mum, December 18)**

The College works closely with external partners to support parents and students including collaboration work with POINT (charity based in Oldham who support children and young people with additional needs and their families) and Positive Steps (careers advice service). POINT recently awarded the ALS Management team an award for **‘Passion for Parents’** at their Annual Awards Ceremony. The College works collaboratively with many specialist external agencies such as Henshaw’s Society for Blind People to ensure that we go beyond expectations to support those affected by sight loss and other disabilities.

**“Working with Oldham College to support their visually-impaired students has felt like a real privilege. I love spending time with the students and working in partnership with them as well as the College staff to plan and facilitate activities and experiences that they might not get to try at home.**

The College is always flexible and communicative, which is essential when working with people with disabilities. Their needs are understood and provided for even on activities that take the students out into the community. Henshaws' collaboration with Oldham College is one that I will be keen to continue. We share a passion for inclusion and while Henshaws' objective is to go Beyond Expectations, Oldham College absolutely does this as well".

**Katy Whitwell, Children and Young People's Enablement Officer, Henshaws Charity for Visually Impaired people.**

Introduction of the **Independent Living Flat and Café** to allow students to develop the skills they will need for independence and work. Adaptations in a specialist Kitchen/Café include greater accessibility for wheel chairs (rise and fall tables and hob; counter dimensions) and a VI Specialist has installed adaptations for VI students (buttons on the appliances and oven). There is also a specially adapted Office (designated real life working environment) and specialist Construction Unit – for those that have career aspirations to work within these sectors, this gives them the perfect opportunity to practice their skills in a technical setting and build up their confidence to develop these skills. Staff are aspirational and encourage students to also develop Team Management or supervisory skills during these opportunities.

**“it's really good because you can cook and it's cosy like home! I have done ironing and washing and have learnt about how to be independent – it's like a real house!” (Hamza J, student)**

The College has a team of highly specialised Communication Support Workers (CSWs) who work with deaf students across College, but also collaborate with external specialists such as Teachers of the Deaf and audiologists who carry out regular checks on students and equipment. The College also recently (October 2018) hosted a visit from the **National Deaf Children's Society** bus which was attended by both deaf/hearing impaired students at the College and external visitors such as year 11 students from schools (Evidence 10).

A carousel programme of **An Introduction to Sign Language** is delivered across College for staff and students to participate in and learn basic skills and raise awareness on how to support students with hearing impairments/deafness. From January 2018 to December 2018 42 students and 18 Oldham College staff members have successfully completed the course.

**“Last term I took up the opportunity to attend the basic British Sign Language course run by our ALS Team. This was a lovely experience. Attending for an**

hour a week over six weeks I got to know a number of students as we had a lot of fun whilst we were learning, both how to do sign language but also about each other as we spoke about our families and where we lived. It has had the effect also of being able to say hello and chat to a wider range of students whilst going about my daily business in my role”.

**Pam Cowen, Learning and Development Manager, Oldham College**

A number of enrichment workshops for students with SEND run weekly, specifically tailored to suit their individual needs; students learn about Equality and Diversity issues and participate in different celebrations for example making their own Easter Eggs and decorating them at Easter. One workshop is around promoting independence for visually impaired students, where students learn life skills such as domestic tasks in and around the flat, or cooking basic meals. Another workshop encourages those with difficulties with social skills to interact with others and develop their communication and confidence of working with others – this is well attended by students with autistic traits who struggle with these skills. (Evidence 7.0, 7.1).

In November 2018 Oldham College held its **Annual Awards Celebration**, celebrating the achievements and progress of learners. **54% of the overall Faculty prize winners were students with special educational needs, indicating that aspirations for SEND students are very high.** As part of the celebration, the students from our discrete high needs provision closed the ceremony with a special `sing and sign` performance, and then enjoyed sharing their experiences with others. This amazing event / grand finale `brought the house down`. Please watch the video here <https://vimeo.com/303680444> and here <https://vimeo.com/303680615>

In 2018, a Learning Resource Coordinator was employed to work in the Learning Resource Centre (LRC). He is part of the Additional Learning Support (ALS) Team and is a qualified Tutor, enabling him to give differentiated support to individuals if they need it. The LRC Coordinator has developed an **Employability Handbook** which supports SEND students with how to disclose their SEND to a potential employer and what their legal rights are around this (Evidence 4).

Oldham College has rolled out a highly creative `Supporting for Distinction` approach in parallel to the highly effective `Teaching for Distinction` (TfD) programme. (Recently featured in TES). Staff encourage positive behaviour across campus, and have some agreed practice for students to adhere to such as not using mobile phones. There is a process in place to ensure this is inclusive for SEND students, some students may be exempt from such practice if they are `working

towards TfD` to ensure that participation is phased and does not cause unnecessary anxiety. Tutors and Support Staff liaise with students to ensure that they time the transition to this approach right. A document has been provided which explains how this concept is used in more detail (Evidence 9).

The introduction of a specialist Dyslexia Tutor in 2018, has enabled liaison with other teaching colleagues to ensure learners are set targets that add value, enable the achievement of stretching learning goals; students are provided with the necessary support to assist them in successfully completing their programmes.

The Dyslexia Tutor has developed innovative and stimulating teaching, learning and assessment materials for use in a range of delivery modes. She works collaboratively with a consortium of students who are `Assist Ambassadors` and explores the most up-to-date assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices as part of researching and developing a full assistive technology strategy. These students then develop several project management skills which are then weaved into their Curriculum Vitae`s and enables the students to demonstrate to future employers, their transferable skills (Evidence 5).

Oldham College works hard to ensure that SEND student`s progress onto positive destinations. In 17/18, 100% of students on discrete high needs provision progressed positively, and 92% of the overall SEND cohort also went on to positive progressions. This was achieved by staff and students understanding their aspirations, working towards the progression goal from day one and also ensuring that opportunities to develop key employability skills are taken. The College has an excellent reputation within the local community and has supported students with transition to external sites, such as voluntary opportunities over a phased period of time.

**‘Learners access highly effective, meaningful and purposeful work experience.**

**Employers value highly the support they receive from staff to offer and sustain good-quality work experience for learners on programmes specifically designed for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.’**

**Supported Internships are particularly effective. Employers report that learners’ work is of a high standard and makes a positive contribution to their business. Staff are ambitious about learners’ ability to access work, particularly paid employment, and most do. Job coaches and employers set relevant targets for work placements that are relevant and help learners gain**

**the skills they need for adulthood. Learners speak highly of their experiences and recognise how they help them to find employment when they leave the college.' Ofsted, 2018**

We have doubled the number of Supported Internships in the last year and will do so again in 2019/20! The progression rate was 100% in the last academic year and is on target to reach that level again this academic year!

**'I have always wanted to have a job as a Gardener. Supported Internship and Oldham College have helped make this dream come true'  
(Callum L, student, on placement at Alexander Park as a Grounds Maintenance worker).**

### **Headline Data**

Our 17/18 achievement data is **87%**, which matches the overall College achievement rate of **87%**. Some students were unable to achieve / complete their main aims due to complex pastoral issues, however College is still able to demonstrate that they developed progress in terms of their cognition and learning and social and emotional development areas.

Retention is very high at **97%** and has increased **4%** in two years. Students feel that their needs are being met and they want to stay at Oldham College and succeed.

**'Managers and the wider staff team carry out thorough and accurate assessments of learners' starting points at the start of their programmes. These inform the planning of learners' courses and ensure that they are on the right course for their needs and aspirations.**

**The multidisciplinary approach to target setting and monitoring is highly effective. All staff work together to plan learning and additional support requirements that learners need so that they achieve their aspirational targets both academically and personally.'**

**Ofsted, 2018**

Oldham College is not stopping here and has recently launched a five year strategic plan to continue our improvement journey even further. Inclusion is the heartbeat of Oldham College and this features throughout the strategic plan and is related ten developmental projects. This document has been consulted on and shared widely with all our local and national stakeholders. We remain ambitious for our future students and look forward to ending this current academic year on a high with the best results ever.



