

Most Inclusive Practice in Further and Higher Education

London South East Colleges

London South East Colleges provides outstanding education and training for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) across the boroughs of Bromley, Bexley and Greenwich at its Nido Volans centres.

The team currently supports **286 16-24-year-olds** with complex to moderate learning difficulties. It provides discrete and personalised study programmes at our Bromley and Bexley Nido Volans Centres.

Nido Volans means 'fly the nest' and that is the College's aim – to give learners the skills, personal development and qualifications they need to work and live with greater independence.

The employability programmes and extensive employer network helps the team to identify a range of employment opportunities for learners with Special Education Needs and Disabilities, offering them the chance to work and develop their skills. For young people who have more severe to complex needs – support is provided to help them live life within the local community via the College's Independent Living programmes.

The learners develop both employability and independent living skills, supported by a specialist team, to prepare them for their adult life and the world of work. Facilities at Bromley and Bexley include the 'Chefs Table' and GMT training kitchens and restaurants, manufacturing workshops and horticultural facilities (including a large polytunnel).

Both campuses have performance spaces to help learners develop their communication and social interaction skills, putting on shows throughout the year.

The provision was rated outstanding by Ofsted in 2019 and the latest achievement and retention rates were all outstanding:

Retention – 99.7%

Achievement – 96.9%

During this unprecedented year, the LSEC SEND team has ensured that learners have not been educationally disadvantaged by the pandemic – while at the same time, helping them to contribute to the local economy and wider community.

This focus has been very much embedded in the College's wider ambition to operate as a social enterprise and add genuine social value to its communities. This pioneering approach is taking the role of the LSEC far beyond that of 'just a college' – and instead is positioning it as an 'Anchor Institution' at the heart of the region and encouraging social mobility. Local residents are being provided with opportunities to reskill/upskill/progress - while businesses and employers are gaining access to well skilled individuals, who will help support economic growth.

SEND learners are a central part of this ambition, with much to offer when given the right opportunities support and access to employment – which is exactly what the College endeavours to do.

Evidence of going above and beyond

Every learner within this provision has a bespoke and personalised timetable – ensuring that individual learning targets are met and progression opportunities are maximised.

In **March, the College's Bexley Campus was set up as the Local Authority SEND Hub**, with staff supporting SEND learners from across the region to access face to face provision while schools and colleges were required to close to the majority of pupils/students.

For those LSEC learners choosing to remain at home, **live lessons enabled them to engage with a full programme of activities** from maths and English to Forest School and sporting challenges – designed to meet individual needs. Staff made regular contact with families to ensure students were managing with remote learning. For those unable to engage online, hard copies were delivered with daily engagement made with all learners.

Employability skills and supporting learners into work is a key priority for and this remained the case throughout the lockdown period. With limited work experience opportunities available, **Bromley Mencap delivered online and face to face workshops to help keep employability skills fresh** and ensure learners are ready to take up real placements once restrictions are lifted.

In addition, a **Woodland Maintenance initiative was set up for learners at the Bromley Campus**. This was managed by a member of the SEND team who is a specialist in Forest School – and ensured his students were able to continue developing their skills at a time when external work experience was not possible.

Community-linked initiatives are a huge focus – with the wider College now operating as a social enterprise. Adding social value to its communities is a priority for all areas of provision, including the Nido Volans centres; which also supports the development of learners' enterprise skills.

Projects undertaken by the SEND team and its students between January and December 2020 include:

- The creation of a Nido Volans shop, with **learners making a range of high quality goods to sell**. An online version is now being launched, feeding into the College's social action agenda and demonstrating the contribution that people with SEND can have within the community <https://www.tes.com/news/send-work-placements-5-steps-sustainable>
- Supporting the **creation of the PEACE garden** in Bromley's Norman Park, with learners developing their teamwork skills alongside their horticultural skills
- **LSEC's FE Foodbank Friday: a national initiative to raise money and collect items for local foodbanks** during the pandemic. SEND staff and students produced and performed a Christmas Pantomime, which was streamed to a virtual audience and contributed to the **£46,000 raised for foodbanks across the region**
- In May 2020, the College was chosen by the **DfE-backed Oak National Academy to provide a range of specialist SEND learning resources**. The College's SEND team helped to create these high quality materials (including delivery of lessons) which were used by schools and parents across the country during the lockdown period.

The team never rests on its laurels or takes its 'outstanding' rating for granted. Everything it does is focused on successful learner outcomes; achieved via rigorous self-evaluation and responsive working with Local Authorities, students and parents.

The team started working with East Sussex College Group in September 2020 in a supportive role to help improve teaching, learning and assessment. This is creating a beneficial two-way sharing of best practice.

The success of the team's work throughout the pandemic was such that the DfE requested a case study to publish in its updated guidance, to help support other SEND providers (see attached).

Evidence of innovation

The College is always looking at ways to innovate in order to improve the experience and outcomes for its learners.

In addition, the organisation's move to become a social enterprise is ensuring that its contribution to the wider community is also a priority.

This innovative approach is benefiting students by highlighting the true value that they can all have within their own communities – be it through the production of high-quality goods, the taking up of employment in a range of local businesses and/or taking part in volunteering activities.

Supporting learners into employment and helping them to live independently where possible is a key part of LSEC's work. To help to this as effectively as possible, the College **is using EMSI data to identify sectors with skills gaps**. This then enables the team to engage with employers who have jobs to fill – providing new opportunities for learners

An example of the success of this approach is a new relationship the College has formed with a logistics company in Bexley. With the pandemic fuelling a rising demand for online sales and deliveries – this is very much a growth sector and will undoubtedly offer employment opportunities for learners looking to progress into work.

Sustainment over two years

Sustaining the College's work and its positive impact is crucial to the continued progression and success of students.

Its ongoing working partnership with Bromley Mencap over the last five years has ensured that learners have been placed in meaningful work placements where they are well supported. Paid outcomes have been brokered for the learners and effective use of Access to Work funding has ensured the support required to maintain the outcomes has been consistent and appropriate.

The College is seeing year on year growth in our supported internships. Four years ago it had just two internship programmes – and now there are six, increasing to seven next year.

The Woodland maintenance initiative will continue to offer work experience to Nido Volans' students as well as supporting the College's green agenda. The nature trail is now being shared with staff to enhance their wellbeing during their working day as well as being made available to local community charity projects for activities such as family treasure hunts.

Enterprise activity is also ongoing, with sales of mulch, manure and wood chip proving successful. A new Flower Farm is being developed for next year, which will provide fresh flowers to go on sale in the Nido Volans shop as well as to local florists over the next few years.

Other sustainability-supporting activity lies within partnership working with other institutions. The supportive work being undertaken with East Sussex College Group is being extended beyond the initial project - with wider introductions being facilitated with SEND colleagues across London. This is widening the collaboration network to improve and share two-way best practice among SEND professionals, ensuring that provision will be strengthened and sustained in the coming years.