

# Support into Employment

## Waltham Forest College



Waltham Forest College is a medium-sized, general further education college in Walthamstow, east London. The college secured the "outstanding" Ofsted grade in the latest inspection in March 2024.

The Foundation Learning department has 96 learners. Ofsted highlighted that "Learners with high needs have life-changing experiences at the college. They are taught exceptionally well by lecturers who are highly qualified and experienced SEND professionals. Staff consistently encourage learners to try new things and provide highly effective support to them to take part in challenging activities. They work very effectively with learners to develop their confidence. For example, learners who lack the confidence to enter the classroom at the start of the year progress to reading aloud at the front of the class, or welcoming customers into the college restaurant. Others, on supported internships, confidently deal with patient enquires when they work on the hospital reception desks."

In our discrete provision, courses cater for young people aged 16-25 with a wide range of physical and developmental needs such as autistic spectrum condition, epilepsy, Downs syndrome or visual impairment that, without support, would impede progression to higher level courses.

Foundation learning has 2 main pathways: Pathway to Independence and Pathway to Employment.

Pathway to Independence: Programmes intended to support young people with the highest level of need to transition to college from a specialist school

or provision. The course has an overall aim of developing independence and communication skills. Learners progressing on to Pathway to Independence will have the highest levels of need in the department and will largely follow an independence curriculum but with some employability if appropriate. Their timetable will include community visits, cooking, independent living skills to develop learners' practical knowledge of everyday activities; enrichment, work experience, alongside communication, PSHE, ICT and some numeracy if appropriate. For example, using numbers in practical context – bus numbers, dates/calendars and measuring in cooking. Cooking is an important part of the curriculum and specific independence skills are developed by this curriculum. Safety and independence in the kitchen are key topics alongside making simple meals with support and sometimes independently or with increasing independence. Learners are encouraged to try new foods and to learn about their provenance. These skills help to prepare young people for independent living in the future or improve their own self-care skills.

Pathway to employment: Programmes intended to develop vocational, work and life skills for learners with higher needs. The intent of this curriculum is to develop the confidence, resilience and life skills of learners required to be Prepared for Adulthood and to improve community and social integration, and with support, move onto supported internships or into volunteering or paid work. Learners are supported to develop their relationships and are taught resilience skills in order to help self-regulate and to manage their emotions. Work skills that have been developed throughout their college career will be consolidated with a narrow focus placed on readiness for work. Learners will also be able to continue developing their maths and English – sitting exams where appropriate.

The discrete provision also includes three supported internships. Project Search is a longstanding supported internship run in partnership with Flourish Learning Trust and is based at both Whipps Cross Hospital and St Barts Health NHS Trust. Interns, across both employment pathways, develop well rounded skills to engage in community work and learn sound employability skills/expertise. Interns receive timely and effective support and mentoring from tutors, employers and job coaches which assists them in undertaking a series of different work rotations in various departments of the hospital and Cafe, such as catering, portering, waiter, receptionist and administration. SEND Coffee gives their interns the opportunity to complete barista training while gaining work experience in a café setting and a new supported internship that has been developed this year and runs in conjunction with the local borough provides interns with experience in

administrative roles at the local borough offices. Many interns go on to gain employment and last academic year 6 out of 8 on SEND coffee supported internship are now working as barista and 12 out of 18 on Project Search are now working in positions such as administrative assistant, receptionist, nursery assistant or catering assistant.