

Inspection of Ambitious College

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Ambitious College is part of the registered charity Ambitious about Autism.

Ambitious College has two main campuses which are co-located with the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London in Tottenham and West Thames College in Isleworth. The supported internship programme is based at The Whittington Hospital in Archway London.

Ambitious College provides education and training to young people aged 16 to 25 years old who have autism spectrum disorder. The majority of learners have speech, language and communication and processing needs. At the time of the inspection, there were 94 learners who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and high needs. Of these, 46 learners study at the West Thames campus, 39 study at the College of North East London and nine learners study the supported internship programme at The Whittington Hospital.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners learn in a highly welcoming, supportive and caring environment. Staff understand the needs of learners very well. They create an environment where there is mutual respect based on compassion and dignity. Learners say that staff are very kind and supportive, which makes them feel safe.

Learners very much enjoy their time at college. They particularly enjoy the varied activities that tutors plan, such as trips in the community, cooking and gardening lessons. Through these activities, learners develop skills which help them to increase their ability to live independently, such as purchasing food and drink from a café. Learners achieve well and make good progress.

Learners develop excellent strategies that help them regulate their emotions and communicate effectively in their everyday lives. This is because staff teach learners exceptionally well how to manage their behaviours and express their feelings. Learners, including those who have significant challenges regulating their emotions, develop exceptionally positive behaviours and attitudes towards their peers, staff and their education. Employers speak highly of supported interns who display remarkable professional behaviours in the workplace.

Learners develop a good understanding of important topics so they can make informed choices and decisions to lead healthy adult lives. Tutors teach learners about relationships, equality, their rights and responsibilities, and the risks of radicalisation and extremism. As a result, learners develop a good understanding of the importance of everyone's right to be themselves, including those from lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning communities and how to keep safe.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, managers and governors have high ambitions and expectations for learners. Leaders and managers have developed a good curriculum offer which enables learners to study one of four pathways: engagement and interaction, maximum independence, preparing for employment, and vocational learning. As a result, most learners benefit from an individually tailored and well-taught programme that is based on their needs, aspirations and ambitions. Learners make good progress and are prepared well to move from college to the next stage of their life.

Most learners take part in a range of meaningful, individualised work experience placements. Learners who are not yet ready to go on a placement spend time learning through work-related activities and develop good employability and communication skills. However, a small number of learners who are considered ready for work do not have meaningful external placements. This means they do not have sufficient opportunities to apply their knowledge in a real work environment.

Tutors plan and teach the supported internship programme well so that interns make good progress towards being ready for work. Tutors and job coaches provide interns with opportunities to develop key skills such as working in a team, following instructions, reading, writing and communication. Interns work in different roles on rotation, which helps them decide on their preferred role. As a result, the majority of interns gain paid employment on completion of their programme. For example, interns work in roles such as patient dining, pharmacy and maintenance.

Leaders and managers make sure that the vocational studies programme is well structured and taught in conjunction with their co-located partner colleges. Tutors from both colleges work in a collaborative way to plan and teach an ambitious vocational curriculum in a range of subjects such as digital arts, creative design, music, information technology and drama. Learners study qualifications from entry level through to level 3, including in English and mathematics. Learners make good progress and achieve their planned goals. On completion, they successfully continue their studies at a higher level within a general further education college.

Leaders and managers do not consistently ensure that all learners study a curriculum that matches their longer-term goals and planned destination. A few learners on the employment programme study a curriculum that prepares them for employment when their planned next destination is to move to adult social care provision.

Tutors and support staff use a range of good teaching strategies in lessons. Tutors break down tasks into small, achievable steps, such as one- and two-step instructions that learners can easily follow. They use varied effective strategies to check learners' understanding. Subsequently, learners make good progress in developing the skills, knowledge and behaviours they will need when they leave the college.

Leaders and managers ensure that learners benefit from well-coordinated therapeutic services. Therapists from a range of disciplines, including speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and positive behaviour support specialists provide good therapeutic support to learners as part of their curriculum. As a result, learners are able to participate in the full range of activities at the college.

Leaders and managers plan a variety of additional activities for learners to participate in each week. Most learners enjoy taking part in the activities, such as sports, drama, arts, drawing and gaming. However, a few learners are not interested in the activities offered. They do not participate fully and this limits their development and enjoyment.

Staff prepare learners well for their next steps. Specialist careers advisers provide suitable advice, guidance and support throughout the year to learners, parents and carers on possible next steps. Staff plan the next steps at an early stage of the programme. As a result, learners have a well-planned transition to their chosen placement. For example, learners move into employment, adult social care services or further education and training.

Leaders and managers provide and an extensive development programme for staff. This includes training on positive behaviour support, autism spectrum disorder, teaching, and support to use technology, including communication devices. As a result, learners are taught and supported by skilled and experienced staff.

Leaders and governors have effective oversight on the quality of provision. Leaders take swift action to improve any weaknesses identified. As a result, the leadership team, including governors, continuously make improvements to the quality of provision, which improves the experience learners receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders and governors have effective oversight of safeguarding in the college, including their obligations under the 'Prevent' duty. Safeguarding is managed effectively by highly trained safeguarding leads. They ensure learners get suitable support in a timely way. They create a strong culture of safeguarding.

Staff receive comprehensive training on a broad range of topics. They are vigilant and go above and beyond to safeguard learners. They work well with outside agencies to keep learners safe from risk of harm or abuse. For example, they make referrals to external agencies where learners have mental health concerns and support access to counselling sessions during college time.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must ensure that they place all learners on programmes so that the curriculum taught matches the learners' long-term goals.
- Leaders must make sure that learners studying the employability curriculum participate in external work placements so that they can apply the skills and knowledge they learn in college in a real work environment.
- Leaders must make sure that all learners have opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities that reflect their individual talents and interests.

Provider details

Unique reference number	141243
Address	The Pears Campus at the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London Tottenham Green Centre Clyde Road, South Tottenham London N15 4RX
Contact number	02038 708775
Website	www.ambitiouscollege.org.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Linda Looney
Provider type	Independent specialist provision
Date of previous inspection	26 to 28 April 2017
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of college, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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