

# Inspection of St Elizabeth's Centre

Inspection dates: 27 to 29 April 2022

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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

## Information about this provider

St Elizabeth's College is part of St Elizabeth's Centre, an organisation founded by the Daughters of the Cross of the Liège in 1903 as a national centre for people with disabling epilepsy. The centre is now a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. The governors of the college report to the centre's trustees. The college is located on the centre's rural 60-acre site near Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire. It provides education programmes for young adults aged 19 to 24 years who have a range of medical and complex learning needs, including epilepsy, autism spectrum disorder, challenging behaviour and visual impairment. Most learners have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A multi-disciplinary team, including specialist nurses, occupational, speech and language therapists and physiotherapists, provides constant physical and medical support for the young people in their care.

At the time of the inspection, there were 23 learners enrolled at the college, most of whom were residential learners. Learners follow learning programmes from pre-entry level to entry level 3 across a range of subject areas such as English, mathematics, art, music and cultural studies. Learners are recruited from a wide area across the south and east of England, and London.

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

Leaders and staff have created a calm and inclusive learning environment where learners feel safe and can flourish. Staff uphold the provider's culture of kindness and care. Consequently, learners develop a good understanding about caring for others, respect and tolerance, and dealing effectively with their own emotions and feelings.

Staff skilfully use a broad range of strategies to help most learners manage their own, often challenging, behaviours, and to participate fully in learning activities. For example, learners make good use of their 'sensory diet' boxes to calm their anxieties through handling tactile objects and using weighted vests and blankets. Through these strategies, most learners enjoy their learning. They overcome many of the challenges that have prevented them previously from making good progress.

Learners benefit from individualised support programmes. Leaders ensure that all staff involved in learners' education, health and care programmes have a consistent approach to providing support for learners, and that they receive such consistent support. For example, lecturers, college learning support assistants and residential learning support assistants follow the same support plans for each learner throughout the college day and in the residences. Staff implement effective sensory stories to help learners to understand and deal effectively with changes in their environment or routines. As a result, staff reduce the level of support that most learners receive over time.

Learners benefit from frequent enrichment activities that help them to develop and improve their social and communication skills considerably over time. They learn to express themselves through art activities and individual music sessions. Staff support learners to understand their rights and responsibilities. Staff promote British values to help learners understand how to live successfully in modern Britain. For example, learners follow a current affairs programme that helps them to develop an awareness of news stories and how these might impact on their lives. They discuss the fuel crisis, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the war in Ukraine and special days such as International Women's Day and World Homeless Day. Learners learn about different faiths and beliefs, including festivals such as Advent, Diwali, Hanukkah and Yom Kippur. Through the Learner Council, learners develop an understanding of democracy and devise their own election campaigns and voting systems.

Learners have access to and benefit from a bespoke college building that contains high-quality resources to support their individual learning activities and needs. They also access other facilities across the centre that enable them to gain other experiences and develop their character, such as music and exercise. However, on a few occasions, lecturers use learning materials that are not age appropriate, for example books such as Goldilocks and the Three Bears and jigsaws that depict cartoon farm animals.

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

Leaders provide an ambitious and individualised curriculum that helps learners to develop the skills they need for their futures. Leaders adapt the curriculum annually to reflect the changing profile of their learners. For example, most learners who have recently enrolled to the college have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities (PMLD), as well as epilepsy.

Leaders and staff know and understand their learners and their needs very well. They use learners' individual education, health and care plan outcomes effectively in order to plan learning and to ensure that learners receive the most appropriate support for their needs. Staff undertake detailed assessments of learners' starting points throughout transition activities and at the start of their programmes. Consequently, staff assign learners to a programme that aligns mostly to their needs and helps them to prepare successfully for adulthood and the wider world.

Learners benefit from a multi-disciplinary approach to their learning. Specialist staff, such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and the positive behaviour support team, contribute frequently into the curriculum to help learners access and benefit from relevant learning activities. Specialist staff provide therapeutic and sensory strategies that help learners integrate into the community and develop independence skills. For example, PMLD learners, with some support, purchased drinks and snacks of their choosing in a public café. They managed their behaviour very effectively in a highly stimulating environment. Speech and language therapists identify and implement appropriate communication tools, such as the communication book. These tools help non-verbal learners to tell staff what they need or want to do quickly and effectively.

Leaders liaise frequently with learners' families and external agencies. They respond swiftly and effectively to feedback from parents to improve learners' experience and progress. For example, leaders worked closely with parents and the local authority to secure an additional year of funding to further develop learners' workplace skills. These opportunities had been affected negatively by the pandemic due to the withdrawal of appropriate work and community placements.

Lecturers and support staff are mostly well qualified. Leaders ensure that staff have frequent training from the multi-disciplinary team to be able to support learners effectively. For example, the personal behaviour support team trains college and residential staff to support learners who struggle to self-regulate their challenging behaviour. The training ensures that staff implement consistent approaches to helping learners access the curriculum. However, leaders do not develop lecturers' teaching skills sufficiently. While leaders support new lecturers to gain teaching qualifications, they do not regularly review and update the pedagogical practices of existing staff to ensure that teaching is consistently of a high quality. A few support staff intervene too quickly when helping learners to complete activities.

Lecturers work closely with specialist staff and learning support staff to establish relevant and challenging targets for learners. They use these individual targets to skilfully challenge learners during lessons. Over time, they ensure that most learners make appropriate and sometimes significant progress. Staff jointly review these targets to ensure that learning and support plans remain effective. Progress reports incorporate input from all academic, support and specialist staff. Leaders and staff use this information to regularly review and develop the curriculum to ensure that it continues to meet the diverse and unique academic, personal and social needs of learners.

Leaders track attendance effectively in order to analyse the reasons for learners' absence. Staff and leaders work closely with residential staff to transition residential learners into college in the morning and at lunchtime. In a minority of instances, learners' attendance is low. This is often related directly to health issues, particularly frequent seizures, or incidents that have occurred overnight or in the morning. However, a few learners refuse persistently to attend learning.

Learners receive limited ongoing careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) on their next steps. Due to the challenges of the pandemic, only those learners who are due to leave the college have received CIAG. For the more able and independent learners, the content of these discussions is not sufficiently challenging for them to know the broader options available to them. For example, discussions do not focus sufficiently on potential paid or voluntary work or the sectors that learners are interested in.

Governance is effective. Governors have an appropriate range of skills, experience and expertise to be able to hold leaders to account. They have a good knowledge of the organisation and understand the strengths and the areas for improvement.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, managers and staff ensure that the safeguarding and the well-being of learners are a high priority. They have implemented appropriate safeguarding arrangements to protect their learners, including regular staff training. Staff record their concerns swiftly and accurately, including those that occur in the residences. Consequently, leaders have a thorough oversight of safeguarding and use this information effectively, to identify any patterns of behaviour and to improve their support for learners.

While leaders include the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism in learners' risk assessments, they have not ensured that learners are aware of the local risks they face.

Learners have an effective understanding of healthy relationships and appropriate behaviour, including in relation to their peers and the wider community.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders should ensure that they provide teaching staff with ongoing, high-quality and relevant training that helps them to improve their craft of teaching.
- Leaders should provide training to ensure that learning support staff promote learners' independence and do not intervene too quickly in learning activities.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that learners receive appropriate ongoing careers information, advice and guidance throughout their time at the college and that, where appropriate, it focuses on the ambitious destinations that many learners are capable of securing, such as paid and voluntary work.
- Leaders should ensure that they provide further training for staff on the implications of radicalisation and extremism for learners and ensure that staff and learners are fully aware of the local risks.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	132015
<b>Address</b>	Perry Green Much Hadham Hertfordshire SG10 6EW
<b>Contact number</b>	01279 844 419
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stelizabeths.org.uk">www.stelizabeths.org.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Teresa Glynn
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent specialist college
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	21 to 23 November 2017
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, 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

Suzanne Wainwright, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Penny Fawcus	Her Majesty's Inspector

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