

Inspection of Works 4 U Support Services (Norman Mackie & Associates Ltd)

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 December 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Information about this provider

Norman Mackie & Associates Limited, trading as Works 4 U Support Services, is an independent specialist college based in Stalybridge, Greater Manchester. The company offers courses, qualifications and training to young people, many of whom have significant barriers to learning and have previously disengaged from education. Many learners have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, there were 58 learners enrolled on provision for learners with high needs from entry level 1 to level 2. Forty-eight learners were aged under 19 and 10 were over 19. Most learners study qualifications in employability and vocational skills in craft and construction, hospitality and catering, horse care, dog grooming and animal care. Learners attend training at the main centre, the farm, and a local events centre. Learners come from Tameside, Manchester, Salford and Stockport.

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

Learners benefit from working with staff who understand the challenges they face in their lives. Staff are helpful, kind and respectful. Leaders support learners effectively to improve their behaviour and overcome potential barriers to their studies. They work extensively with external agencies to ensure that learners with significant mental health problems are supported to manage their anxieties, which enables learners to remain on their courses. Most learners complete their courses and move on to further education and training.

Learners feel accepted in how they choose to present themselves and are confident to be themselves. They ensure that they use the preferred pronouns with their peers. Consequently, learners improve their confidence, begin to lead healthier lives and plan for life after college.

Learners are proud to serve their local community. They learn how to become active and valued citizens through highly motivating community projects and activities. For example, learners repair broken benches in the town, prepare, cook and serve food to the homeless and clear the local riverside of waste. They understand the importance of making positive changes in their local area.

Learners develop positive relationships with staff and their peers. Staff skilfully support learners to prepare for their studies. Learners receive a free breakfast, and staff encourage learners to take part in games and quizzes each day before attending classes to develop their communication skills and confidence. Staff ensure that learners have a positive start to their day.

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

Leaders and managers plan ambitious curriculums that meet the needs of local vulnerable young people. The curriculums are designed to equip learners with the skills, knowledge and behaviours that they need to succeed in their lives beyond college. Staff have high expectations for learners, and the large majority move into employment or further education and training.

Leaders and managers have carefully chosen appropriate qualifications in employability and vocational subjects. They have recently revised the curriculums, introducing a personal development qualification to support learners to develop the employability skills they need to help them to achieve their long-term goals and aspirations.

Most learners have previously refused learning, missed learning or were poor attenders at school. Leaders have introduced a reward programme for behaviour and attendance that is having a positive effect on the behaviour and attendance of learners. However, learners' attendance at lessons, although improved, is not yet at a consistently high rate.

Learners benefit from a well-planned personal development curriculum that covers a wide range of topics including relationships, sex education, alcohol and drug misuse, and health and well-being. Leaders work closely with external agencies and professionals, such as sexual health advisors, to develop the personal development curriculum. Most learners understand fundamental British values and how these relate to them, such as democracy and the role of the local member of parliament. As a result, learners are better prepared to make informed decisions about healthy relationships and know how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders have developed strong community and employer partnerships to ensure that learners benefit from good-quality internal and external work experience placements. Learners develop skills for the workplace through internal work experience, such as in the café, dog grooming salon, farm and the community catering service, before moving on to work experience in the local community. Learners gain a good understanding of the workplace and the skills and behaviours needed for employment.

In a few instances, leaders and managers have not assessed the quality of work placements rigorously enough. In a few cases, learners do not have clear job roles to keep them focused on their work tasks or specific information about the areas that they can and cannot access.

Most staff plan teaching skilfully, using a variety of activities that enthuse learners. In functional skills English classes, teachers focus on developing learners' employability skills. Learners learn how to complete job applications and understand technical terminology such as occupation, dependents and nationality.

Teachers do not use questioning of learners effectively to check or reinforce what they have learned. Staff rely on learners to volunteer answers to questions, which means that those learners who are the least confident or have limited communication skills are often overlooked.

Staff feedback on learners' written work is ineffective. Too few learners receive frequent feedback. Learners are unclear as to what they have done well or what they need to do to improve their work. Staff do not identify or correct learners' spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. Learners are not always able to improve their written work or correct mistakes.

Learners benefit from effective careers education, advice and guidance through the local authority careers advisors. Learners make informed decisions about their next steps after college. Leaders have plans in place to train a few job coaches to provide careers education, advice and guidance to learners.

Leaders' training for staff does not ensure that they improve their teaching skills. Staff benefit from training to support learners with specific medical needs, but they do not receive training to develop their understanding of teaching learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Recently appointed job coaches

have not received training to help them to support learners to prepare for their work placements.

The advisory board provides effective challenge and support to leaders. Board members have extensive experience in business, local authorities and education. They use their experience to advise and inform the provider's range of curriculums, particularly for skills for employment.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve learners' attendance further.
- Improve the accuracy and frequency of assessment and feedback to learners.
- Ensure that teaching staff receive specialist SEND training to understand how to teach learners with specific needs.
- Ensure job coaches receive training to support learners to prepare for their work experience placements.
- Ensure all work experience placements are suitable for learners.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58507
Address	Ambleside Stalybridge SK15 1EB
Contact number	0161 303 1069
Website	www.works4u.org.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Wendy Mackie
Provider type	Independent Specialist College
Date of previous inspection	17 to 19 September 2019
Main subcontractors	none

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, 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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