

Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Information Report

Birmingham Independent College

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Introduction

This SEND Information Report has been prepared in accordance with Section 69 of the Children and Families Act 2014, the Special Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, the Equality Act 2010 and the SEN Code of Practice 0–25 years.

Admissions

Birmingham Independent College (BIC) is a small, specialist independent college for learners aged between 14 and 25. Most students have an Autism Spectrum diagnosis, but encompass a wide range of abilities, including those who are able to access Higher education, those working to achieve Functional skills qualifications and those with more Complex needs.

At BIC all students have an EHCP and are referred to (BIC) by Local Authorities Special Educational Needs Assessment & Review (SENAR) teams.

SENAR teams are responsible for allocating places and maintaining Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) of young people with special educational needs. BIC accepts students with EHCPs from all Local Authorities.

All admissions from Birmingham LA are requested via SENAR Birmingham (021 303 1888), SENAR@Birmingham.gov.uk

Birmingham Local Offer

The Birmingham **Local Offer** website includes information about the wide range of services that are available to support all areas of a Young Person's life, especially those with a Special Educational Need or Disability.

Birmingham SENARs Local Offer is here:

<https://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk/>

Involving Parents and carers

At BIC we aim to work in partnership with parents and carers at all times to achieve the best outcomes for our students. A number of our students are nonverbal, and we rely on families to share information about their wellbeing with us.

An important communication tool with families is the home-college communication diary. This is written in regularly to communicate essential information and share the activities and achievements that have taken place during the day. Families also have access to the “Evidence for Learning” software which enables them to view photos and video clips of their young person’s progress, which parents are encouraged to add to at home.

Twice during the academic year online and live workshops are held for parents and carers to update everyone on changes and developments. All students have an Annual Review of their EHCP, with more frequent meetings if necessary. In addition, families are always welcome to make an appointment to come into college to meet with senior staff.

Families are fully involved in the Annual EHCP review process.

Formal written reporting on student progress takes place annually.

Teaching & Learning

At BIC, our students fall into three main groups and are offered different pathways according to their needs:

- Complex Needs Pathway students follow an individualised curriculum focusing on developing communication, independence, community participation and preparation for adulthood. This includes developing the use of PECS, ALD boards and visual communication systems, developing independence in life skills such as shopping and money handling, and participating in farm-based learning and community sports programmes each week to develop social interaction and widen experience. Students have opportunities to complete a range of ASDAN units and accredited learning modules.

- Functional Skills Pathway students follow a curriculum with an emphasis on gaining formal functional literacy and numeracy qualifications, ranging from Entry Level 1 to Level 2. They also participate in farm-based and community sports programmes weekly and work towards completing ASDAN units and accredited learning outcomes in a range of areas of personal development. It is possible for some students to progress to the Academic Pathway once they have achieved Entry level qualifications, although others have moved on to successful work placements or courses at other colleges.
- Academic Pathway students have the initial target of achieving GCSE passes (Grade 4+) in Maths, English Language and Double Science, though other GCSE courses may also be available. When these have been achieved students have the option to stay at BIC to complete Level 3 courses, either A-level or BTEC, leading to university level courses, or may move on to other Level 3 providers, employment or training.
- All students have PSHE and RSE strands included in their weekly timetable.

All our students benefit from small group or 1:1, 2:1 and 3:1 support. Teaching and learning resources are adapted and modified to meet student need. Visual supports such as objects of reference, visual timetables and social stories support understanding and communication.

Transition Planning

New students have a flexible entry to BIC, based on their needs. They may attend part-time initially, building up to a full timetable, while their needs can be assessed and their response to their new environment can be evaluated.

When moving on from BIC, students are supported in researching their next locations and courses, with the additional assistance of the Careers Service. They are provided with help where necessary to complete applications.

We recognise that before reaching the age of 25, detailed planning is required, involving SENAR, BIC, Adult Services and families, to ensure that suitable post-25 placements and opportunities are available to our Complex Needs Pathway students.

Student Support

Complex Needs Pathway students have at least 1:1 support from classroom assistants to enable them to build positive relationships and engage fully with the curriculum. Some students require a higher ratio of support. A key role of classroom assistants is to ensure the wellbeing of students at all times, including offsite activities such as shopping, helping at the farm or engaging with sports. Students often require direct assistance with personal care and hygiene during the college day.

Functional Skills Pathway and Academic Pathway students may be taught as part of a small group (up to 10 students), by qualified and experienced teachers.

Other professionals may be involved in supporting our students or providing advice to staff. They include:

- Educational Psychologists
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Healthcare Professionals
- Counselling Services
- Mentoring Services
- Social Workers
- Work Placement Managers

Emotional and Social Development

BIC aims to create a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students.

The students on the Complex Needs Pathway are largely nonverbal and developing communication skills is seen as key in reducing dysregulation and encouraging social interaction and engagement. Priority is being given to increasing the use of PECS and ALD boards for making choices and indicating preferences, with many opportunities during the day for meeting and greeting others and practicing skills. Offsite activities such as spending time at the farm or participating in group sports help students to engage with others in shared activities.

Other students are encouraged to discuss their feelings and anxieties with the teaching staff. Class sizes are small, so staff get to know their students well. At times of stress, such as leading up to exams, counselling services have proved helpful in providing support and strategies to students who feel they are struggling with revision or deadlines.

BIC provides positive behaviour support to all students, based on specialist professional staff training. Safeguarding procedures are followed and risk assessments are available for all students.

Student Assessment

Prior to admission, BIC reviews each student's EHCP and associated professional reports, health and therapy recommendations, previous educational records and risk assessments.

All students at BIC have an up-to-date EHCP. Their EHCP outcomes, based on SEN Areas of Need (Communication and Interaction, Cognition and learning, Social, Emotional and Mental Health, Sensory and Physical) and Preparing for Adulthood criteria (Employment and Education, Independent Living, Community Inclusion, Healthy Living) form the basis of their assessment, with outcomes broken down into interim targets and learning intentions, progress being monitored on an ongoing basis.

Complex Needs Pathway students' progress is evaluated on a lesson-to-lesson basis in a section of the lesson plan, by their classroom assistant, so that the pace and content can be adapted to the student's needs. Video and photo evidence of achievements are uploaded to "Evidence for Learning" which can be viewed by staff, students and families.

Students on the Functional Skills and Academic Pathways also have regular verbal and written assessments and feedback to develop exam technique alongside their subject knowledge. Baseline assessments are undertaken on entry to identify strengths and starting points for learning. When ready they complete practice papers under exam conditions, supported with Access arrangements where appropriate, to increase familiarity with and reduce anxiety in the examination process.

EHCP outcomes are reviewed annually, in consultation with families and involved professionals, and new interim targets are set.

Staff Training

Staff are carefully selected on the basis of their skills, qualification and experience. BIC has implemented a training and professional development programme for all staff to enable them to meet the needs of the students. This has included whole staff training days based around topics such as SEN legislation and practice, Autism awareness, behaviour support, communication strategies including developing the use of PECS and ALD, introducing RSE, the requirements of Ofsted and First Aid. There are also annual inset sessions to cover lesson planning, assessment procedures and understanding the SEND process and terminology. Lesson observations are undertaken regularly by senior staff who provide constructive feedback and advice.

All staff are trained and assessed annually on Child Protection and Keeping Children Safe in Education policies.

Handling Complaints

Complaints about any aspect of BICs provision should be made directly to the senior management team:

Head of College:

Ms Hermin McIntosh hmcintosh@biccollege.org

Operations Manager:

Ms Vivienne Lambert vlambert@biccollege.org

Birmingham Independent College info@biccollege.org 0121 507 0904

SENCO details

Ms Gillian Situnayake gsitunayake@biccollege.org

Link to Birmingham Independent College SEND Policy: www.biccollege.org