

Dorton College of Further Education

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 133001

Name of lead inspector: Joyce Deere HMI

Last day of inspection: 22 October 2010

Type of provider: Independent specialist college

Address: Seal Drive
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Information about the provider

1. Dorton College of Further Education is a specialist residential college, which is owned by the Royal London Society for the Blind (RLSB), a charitable trust. The college, a school and a nursery are located on a 47 acre site at Seal, near Sevenoaks in Kent. It provides further education for learners who are blind or partially sighted. Increasingly, the cohort of students who attend have multiple additional needs. Currently, 49 students are funded by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), and one is privately funded. Of these, 43% are male, and 25% are from minority ethnic communities. The college works with three partner colleges, and 19 students follow their main programme in one of these. Thirty students are now taught on the Dorton College site.
2. The college has experienced a significant decline in its numbers over the past few years, declining from 74 at the last inspection to 49. In response to this, RLSB has merged the school and college and has one education board which reports to the trustees. In three of the six tutor groups, Dorton College students are taught in the same classes as 14-and 15-year-olds. At the time of the inspection, a Director of Services, new chair and a new chief executive officer had been recently appointed.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Young learner provision: Further education (16-18)	30 full-time learners
Adult learner provision: Further education (19+)	19 full-time learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision		Grade 4
Capacity to improve		Grade 4
		Grade
Outcomes for learners		4
Quality of provision		4
Leadership and management		4
Safeguarding		4
Equality and diversity		3

Overall effectiveness

3. Dorton College has not been able to maintain the quality of provision since the last inspection. Outcomes for students on externally validated courses have declined, and the college does not have any effective measures to evaluate the overall progress made by students. Teaching and learning are inadequate. The quality of specialist therapeutic and medical support continues to be a strength of the college. Leadership and management are inadequate. The arrangements to merge the college and the school are not appropriate for the adult students. The governors have not required the college to provide adequate information to enable them to oversee the college's performance, and do not have appropriate reporting arrangements. The arrangements for safeguarding are inadequate. Equality and diversity are adequately promoted overall, with good examples of specific initiatives to stimulate staff and students. Staff are not adequately qualified to teach literacy and numeracy.

Main Findings

- Outcomes for students have not improved since the previous inspection and in some cases success rates have declined. The college has no systems in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the achievement of targets and does not keep adequate records of success rates and does not track progress on an annual basis. Destinations data have not been adequately analysed.
- Teachers do not use appropriate methods to engage students and activities are not planned to meet their diverse needs. Teachers do not use information and learning technology (ILT) to enliven sessions, and the resources and use of language are not always appropriate for adult students.

- Teachers do not make sufficient use of assessment information to identify individual targets. Too many targets are unspecific or simply copied from qualification specifications. They are insufficiently focused on students' vocational work or life goals.
- The curriculum at the Dorton College site does not provide sufficient opportunity for learners to progress and work placement opportunities are not yet adequate. The curriculum is still in the early stages of development, with too much focus on the requirements of qualifications. It does not fit well with a person-centred approach. The partnerships with the general further education colleges enable more able students to access a very wide range of options.
- Individual specialist interventions for students are good. A wide range of specialists provide very effective physical, psychological and mobility support. Students make good progress in managing their conditions and improving their communication skills.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. The implications of the decision to merge the school with the college were not sufficiently thought through. The needs of the college students, many of whom are in their twenties, are not adequately being met.
- Governors have not ensured that the performance of the college is adequately monitored, and have not developed performance indicators to enable this to happen. They do not know what progress the college is making year on year. They have not required the college to provide reports on safeguarding incidents, the annual equalities plan or health and safety. Progress since the last inspection has been slow and significant areas for improvement remain.
- Safeguarding is inadequate. The college has appropriate policies and all staff have had Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. However, the college has not systematically reported incidents to governors and the recording and follow up of incidents are inadequate. The college does not carry out checks to ascertain whether agency staff have had adult and child protection training and not all staff enforce protective safety procedures.
- Many of the quality improvement arrangements are new and have not yet had time to improve the quality of provision. The monitoring of the provision and new systems is weak. The self-assessment report does not provide sufficient evidence to support the judgements and does not provide a sound basis for future planning.

What does Dorton College need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes by developing effective mechanisms that measure students' progress throughout their time at the college, and provide sufficient management information to enable managers to evaluate the college's performance from year to year.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teaching and support staff have sufficient specialist expertise to work with students with a

diverse range of learning needs, and that they can use a wider range of methods to stimulate students.

- Review the students' programmes and their targets more frequently and more thoroughly so that areas for improvement can be identified at earlier points in the year and individual needs and aspirations are more effectively met.
- Review the curriculum so that it is structured more appropriately for young adults and provides better opportunities for work-related activities and experiences.
- Review the arrangements for the teaching of the students on the Dorton College campus so that the accommodation is more appropriate for young adults.
- Ensure that the governors better monitor the provision by implementing changes to its arrangements so that they can better oversee the college's performance.
- Improve the arrangements for safeguarding by ensuring that adequate checks are made on agency staff, that all safeguarding incidents are fully and accurately recorded, and that staff enforce protective safety procedures.
- Implement and improve the quality assurance arrangements so that all aspects of the programme are routinely monitored and the college is continuously evaluating and putting actions in place to improve its performance.
- Ensure that staff who teach or support students to develop their literacy and numeracy skills are adequately trained and that the college meets national requirements.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the opportunities to attend local colleges
- the meeting with the new chief executive
- their tutors
- playing sports and going swimming
- playing the piano and drumming
- learning to use the iron
- being independent but getting help with a few areas where support is still needed
- cooking their own meals.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more activities on the computer such as using email to write home
- more trips and visits
- early information on what will happen on leaving Dorton College

- staff listening to students and not making all the decisions for them
- more support staff at weekends
- the decorative order of residential units.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 4

4. The college has not shown improvement since the previous inspection and many areas for improvement remain, with slow progress made. The college continues not to provide adequate information in the self-assessment report about the overall performance of students, and the systems for measuring the progress of students over time are in the early stages of development. Governors have not set the college targets and have not required the college to provide reports on performance, or on specific issues such as safeguarding incidents or the equalities action plan. The merging of the college with the school has not been implemented appropriately for students in a further education college. The college has not ensured that its staff are adequately trained to meet skills for life requirements, and further staff training is required to meet the increasingly complex needs of the students. The college is still in the process of restructuring and defining its management roles.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 4

5. Outcomes for students are inadequate. The data relating to the students at the main partner college show a decline in success rates since the previous inspection. Success rates at A* to C grades in the GCSE subjects taught at the main Dorton College site are low. Although many students achieve their targets, it is not clear how challenging the targets were. The college does not measure the progress of students in relation to their starting points. Student destinations are recorded but no analysis of destinations in relation to student goals is carried out, and no follow up of students' progress after leaving college takes place. No significant differences between groups of learners were identified by the college in its self-assessment report.
6. The development of economic and social well-being is satisfactory. The development of social well-being is good within the residences, but the opportunities for work experience are insufficient. Students say they feel safe and mostly know who to go to for support. The promotion of the health and well-being of students is good and students make a satisfactory contribution to the community.

The quality of provision

Grade 4

7. Teaching and learning are inadequate. The teaching methods and resources being used do not meet the needs of the students well. Students have too few opportunities for active participation, and often lose interest because tasks are too easy or difficult. Students are sometimes unable to complete oral tasks because of other activities in the room. Teachers sometimes use inappropriate language and materials for adult students. There is little direct promotion of equality and diversity in lessons. Staff do not always reinforce safe practices in hand washing at the farm, and in crossing the road.

8. The college gathers information about students' abilities and needs at the beginning of the academic year, but staff do not use this sufficiently well in target setting. Despite improvements in target setting in the residences and for those attending general further education colleges, too many targets are unspecific and in some cases are copied from the course specifications. Vocational learning goals are not always clear. Teachers frequently fail to provide feedback needed for students' personal tutors to review their progress effectively.
9. Classrooms and the residences are well equipped with computers. However, staff are insufficiently aware of the range of potentially useful, specialised computer packages to provide stimulating learning opportunities.
10. Teaching staff have, or are working towards, appropriate adult teaching qualifications. However, they are not qualified to teach or support students in the development of their literacy or numeracy skills and have had insufficient training to enable them to meet the increasingly complex needs of the students. Not all staff have completed equality and diversity training, although there are plans for this to take place.
11. The range of provision and the timetabling are not sufficiently well structured to develop the work skills needed for progression. Many vocational areas fail to provide sufficient opportunities to practise and develop skills in real situations. Too few students have work placements. Structured links between residences and the college are insufficient, although informal communication has improved. Enrichment activities are satisfactory.
12. Dorton College uses local partnerships well. Community partnerships provide good opportunities for voluntary work and links with performing arts and music venues enable students to take part in community music events. Partnerships with local further education establishments satisfactorily extend the curriculum offer. However, further education college staff do not all have sufficient training in relation to specific students, and data on outcomes for Dorton College students are not always easily obtainable.
13. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. The newly-restructured transition programme is well designed but has yet fully to prove its effectiveness. The college does not have a work-experience organiser.
14. Individual specialist therapeutic care and support for students are good. A wide range of experienced specialists provide very effective physical and psychological support. Most students make good progress in managing their conditions and improving their communication skills and confidence. Skilled mobility trainers provide students with a carefully-staged programme. However, until recently, staff shortages have meant that some students have had to wait to start training. The range and availability of assistive technology are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Grade 4

15. Leadership and management are inadequate. Since the last inspection, the college has not been able to maintain the quality of its work. The principal and senior staff have worked hard to regain lost ground, but the achievements of students have not improved. The college has not developed key measures that enable its performance to be measured effectively, and many arrangements are newly in place. The merging of the school and college has resulted in an unsatisfactory situation for the college students.
16. During the period of change and restructure, following a significant decline in overall numbers, the governors have successfully focused on financial and business arrangements. However, they have not overseen the performance of the college provision effectively. They have not required the college to provide meaningful data about its performance, or to provide reports on health and safety, safeguarding incidents or the equalities action plan. Governors have recently had safeguarding training, but not equality and diversity training. There is no student representative on the education board.
17. The arrangements for safeguarding are inadequate. All policies and procedures are in place and staff have been checked by the CRB. The central register is up to date. The college does not check that agency staff have had adequate child and adult protection training, and incidents are not systematically reported to the governors. The recording and follow-up of incidents are inadequate. The college's risk register does not adequately recognise the high level of risks that face students. Staff have not had training in relation to the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and the college does not have a personal relationships policy. Protective health and safety procedures are not always enforced by staff.
18. Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily. The corporate equality and diversity committee has just completed its single equality scheme. It has carried out impact assessments and taken action. Equalities workforce data are analysed and the corporation has been successful in attracting more male support staff. A start has been made in analysing student data, by looking at the achievements of targets in relation to specific conditions. The college promotes its anti-bullying and harassment policies well. During the last year the equality and diversity officer successfully implemented specific initiatives to engage students and staff. Not all college staff have attended training to encourage the promotion of equality and diversity in their teaching, and inspectors found little evidence of this being effectively implemented. Equality and diversity were not explicitly included in the teaching observation scheme criteria.
19. The college has a variety of ways of obtaining the views of learners and their parents and makes satisfactory use of this information. Communications with parents have improved substantially in response to complaints and are now good. The college produces weekly newsletters, runs six-weekly parents' meetings and open days, consults parents on their preferred contact pattern and method and provides phone-in times. Parents and learners are consulted

on holiday dates, menus, medical services and accommodation changes. Learners respond to satisfaction questionnaires on induction and the first weeks of term. The student council is in the early stages of development.

20. The processes for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the college's work are unsatisfactory. Although systems to monitor students' progress have been developed, they have not yet had time to be effective, and much is in the early stages of implementation. The annual cycle of headline evaluation is satisfactory, but the staff teams are not sufficiently involved in reviewing the effectiveness of the programmes during the year. The scheme for the observation of teaching and learning was reinstated last year and greater rigour has been introduced, but a systematic programme to improve the standard of teaching has yet to be implemented.
21. The college has good specialist resources, but has not ensured that teaching staff have taken the required qualifications in skills for life, and does not have sufficiently qualified or experienced staff to reflect the increasingly complex needs of students. The current classroom usage is not appropriate for the college students, and staff shortages have impacted adversely on students' experiences. Outcomes for students are inadequate as is value for money.

Information about the inspection

22. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
23. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires that learners and parents had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions and carried out case studies of individual students. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes across the curriculum at the Dorton College site and from a visit to the main partner general further education college.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Dorton College of Further Education

Learning types: 14–16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16–18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	49	30	19
Overall effectiveness	4	4	4
Capacity to improve	4		
Outcomes for learners	4	4	4
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	4		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	4		
How well do learners progress?	4		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3		
How safe do learners feel?	3		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3		
Quality of provision	4	4	4
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	4		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	4		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
Leadership and management	4	4	4
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	4		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	4		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	4		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	4		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	4		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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