

Regent College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 131968

Name of lead inspector: Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI

Last day of inspection: 10 March 2011

Type of provider: Independent specialist college

Address: 77 Shelton New Road
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
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Information about the provider

1. Regent College is an independent specialist college offering day provision for learners aged 16 to 25 years. The college operates from one building near the centre of Stoke-on-Trent. Currently, all learners are funded directly by the Young People’s Learning Agency (YPLA). The college was established in 1999 by Shelton Care Limited to meet the needs of learners who could not access mainstream further education.

2. The educational programme is aimed at developing learners’ independence skills through individual programmes, and uses a range of local facilities for community awareness, leisure, recreation and gardening. All learners attending the college have learning difficulties ranging from moderate to severe. Around 12% of learners are of minority ethnic heritage, which is higher than that of the local area. Just over two thirds of learners are male. The college is overseen by an advisory board that includes two directors of the parent company, Shelton Care Limited.

3. The college’s mission is, ‘developing independence in an adult world through communication, vocational, social and life skills’.

| Type of provision | Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10 |
|---|--|
| <p>Provision for young learners:</p> <p>Further education (16 to 18)</p> | <p>4 full-time learners</p> |
| <p>Provision for adult learners:</p> <p>Further education (19+)</p> | <p>21 full-time learners</p> |

Summary report

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

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Overall effectiveness of provision | Grade 3 |
|---|----------------|

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Capacity to improve | Grade 3 |
|----------------------------|----------------|

| | Grade |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Outcomes for learners | 3 |
| Quality of provision | 3 |
| Leadership and management | 3 |
| Safeguarding | 3 |
| Equality and diversity | 3 |

Overall effectiveness

4. Regent College’s overall effectiveness remains satisfactory. Learners enjoy attending college. They gain high levels of confidence through a wide and varied range of social enterprise activities. Learners achieve their goals satisfactorily overall, although a few exceed their potential. Activities in lessons are planned to appeal to learners’ interests but too much variation in the quality of individual targets and in the recording of small steps in learning means the overall progress made by learners is not always maximised or captured effectively.
5. The college is improving the quality of its provision steadily. The range of qualifications on offer is adequate. The links and collaboration with other organisations are wide-ranging and provide learners with very good opportunities to get involved in projects, events and activities in and outside of the college. This along with good support mechanisms enables many learners to become more independent, particularly in regards to managing their behaviour and learning to travel.
6. Leaders and managers know what is needed to improve. However, the college’s processes to ensure the quality and rate of improvement across its work are not sufficiently coherent. The advisory board and parent company are supportive of the college’s work but do not encourage college managers to be sufficiently ambitious to help raise expectations across all areas of provision. Subsequently, the college’s capacity to improve is impeded.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Pass rates for accredited qualifications are high. Several learners make good gains in social and personal skills. However, the progress learners make is often impeded by the lack of precise or challenging individual long and short-term targets. The quality in the recording of learners' progress individual learning plans, particularly small steps in learning, is too inconsistent.
- Learners benefit significantly from the good opportunities available to get involved in working or volunteering in the community. Learners partake in a wide array of charity raising activities which are well publicised and increase their enjoyment. Travel training is extensive and increases learners' confidence when they are outside college and this contributes effectively to learners feeling really safe.
- Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Initial assessment is thorough and used well to develop an individual learning plan for each learner. Lessons are planned to include appropriate activities to increase learners' interest. However, the quality of individual targets and the recording of progress in lessons vary too much with some good and some poor.
- The curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners appropriately. Learners engage in and enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities. The college is in the early stages of developing a framework for foundation learning.
- Partnership work is strong and benefits learners greatly. Good collaboration with schools, local colleges and arts and cultural organisations has led to an increased learner participation in a wide range of projects, events and work placements.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Behaviour management is a strong feature and wherever possible learners work with teachers to better understand and manage their own behaviour. Support for transition has improved and is now good.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Actions taken by leaders and managers since the previous inspection have strengthened several aspects of the college's provision. However, actions to bring about improvement in other key areas such as the quality of teaching and learning have been less marked.
- The overview and challenge provided by the college's advisory board is satisfactory. The role of the advisory board in conjunction with the parent company in helping to raise expectations within the college, although improved recently, is insufficient. Advisory board members bring a range of expertise but this is not reviewed or channelled effectively to aid their scrutiny of the college's performance.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. Travel training and behaviour management processes are comprehensive. Safe working practices are promoted well through lessons. However, although the reporting and monitoring of several aspects of safeguarding and health and safety is undertaken, it is not always clearly summarised or undertaken in sufficient detail.

- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners' awareness of different cultures is being raised effectively. The college analyses equalities information such as learner achievement. However, it does not analyse or evaluate all of this in sufficient detail or extract the key information to enable it to report or monitor precisely any patterns or trends between different groups.
- The rigour of quality improvement processes across the college's work is insufficient. Although much data and information are collected, it is not always used well enough by managers to evaluate, monitor or report performance or review the impact of actions taken. Self-assessment, while broadly accurate, has not brought about swift enough improvement in all areas.

What does Regent College need to do to improve further?

- To improve the progress learners make by ensuring targets within individual learning plans are meaningful, appropriately challenging and sufficiently precise; improving the quality of recording of learners' achievement so that all progress can be captured no matter how small the steps in learning; and strengthening the college's procedures to check and report on the quality of individual learning plans.
- To strengthen significantly the quality improvement processes across the college to increase their effectiveness in bringing about a faster rate of improvement by ensuring greater focus is given to the careful analysis and interpretation of data and by providing clearer reporting and more frequent monitoring of performance.
- Ensure the advisory board and parental company are better placed to provide support and challenge senior managers, to help raise expectations across the college by ensuring all targets are sufficiently ambitious, timely and measurable; making sure the reports they receive on key areas of the college's work are provided in a format that gives a clear and meaningful overview of performance trends and ensuring clearer accountability of the board.
- Improve the college's self-assessment so that is not just accurate in its identifying issues but is also effective in bringing about rapid improvement of these by using data better, particularly trend data, to demonstrate impact. In addition, ensure rigorous validation of the self-assessment report.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- being at the college
- working in groups and feeling less anxious
- the support they get and that they can talk anyone when they need to
- the range of social activities, particularly playing sports
- being involved in the fundraising events because it makes them feel proud.

What learners would like to see improved:

- no areas for improvement identified.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

7. Since the previous inspection the college has expanded the range of work and social enterprise activities for learners and notably extended its collaboration with other organisations. Support for learners has improved and is now good. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate in its evaluation. However, self-assessment and quality improvement processes have not been sufficiently rigorous or effective to bring about enough rapid or sustained improvement in some key areas of the college's work. The advisory group has recently strengthened its scrutiny of the college's performance and is satisfactory overall. Learners' views are increasingly gathered and used effectively to inform improvements but these are not incorporated formally through self-assessment.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

8. Pass rates are high across a range of nationally accredited life skills, communication and vocational awards. Learners make satisfactory progress against their learning targets. Where learners' targets are precise and challenging and relate to their main learning goals, progress is much clearer. However, several targets are not specific enough or in a few cases, too simple for the ability of the learner, making the recording and measure of progress, particularly the smaller steps in learning, difficult and less effective.
9. Many learners undertake work experience to help prepare them well for life after college. The development of learners' functional skills is adequate. The college's self-assessment assessed learners' outcomes accurately as satisfactory. However, it did not report sufficiently on how well different groups of learners achieve. The college collects basic achievement data on gender and ethnicity but its evaluation of data is crude making it very hard to monitor how different groups perform over time.
10. Learners develop increased levels of confidence in their personal and social skills. They work particularly well in groups, and in communicating with a range of people. Many learners who are unable initially to enter or stay comfortably in a classroom environment now participate more fully in group sessions. Others use local leisure and retail amenities successfully for the first time. Learners enjoy the increased social aspects of college activities, particularly the sports events and discos.
11. Learners feel really safe in college and when visiting local amenities. They know who to talk to if they have concerns and are able to do so successfully. Risk assessments are thorough and appropriate for groups and individuals and provide a consistently safe place for learners. They learn to work safely in all environments and are aware of hygiene and health hazards.

12. Learners are supported well in making healthy choices in daily living. Sporting activity is promoted frequently by visits to leisure facilities. Learners' individual stress levels are carefully monitored and adapted accordingly to minimise their anxiety. Healthy eating is discussed often and supported by a good range of healthy options in the college's restaurant.
13. The wide range of projects, events and volunteering activities available allows learners to make a very positive contribution to the community. Apart from learners' use of local amenities and widespread volunteer activities, they undertake many successful fundraising activities for local and national charities.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

14. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers and support staff know their learners very well. Thorough initial assessments provide accurate information which informs the individual learning plan and subsequent learning targets effectively. Session activities are generally well designed to increase the interest of learners. In several subjects, however, learning targets do not relate sufficiently to the topic, are either overcomplicated or too vague, or do not link clearly back to learners' overarching goals. Good use is made of adaptive technologies and communication aids to support individual learners' needs within sessions. The broader use of information and communication technologies (ILT) to enhance teaching and learning is limited.
15. In the best sessions assessment is used very well to check learners' understanding but this is not consistent across all subjects. In a few sessions opportunities are missed to reinforce learners' numeracy and literacy skills. Individual learning plans list far too many targets, making tracking and checking of progress cumbersome. In a number of cases, specific targets for subjects just list an activity such as 'paint a wall', rather than outlining specifically what skills are expected to be learnt from it. Managers do not formally audit and report on the quality of individual learning plans.
16. The curriculum provides good opportunities to practice communication for everyday living. Individual programmes of learning are tailored to learners' needs and in many cases learners are involved fully in identifying the activities that they wish to pursue. Learners engage in and enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities. All learners have access to work experience or volunteering opportunities. Recently, the college has invested in a media suite which offers extensive opportunities for learners to gain experience in interviewing, filming and editing. The development of foundation learning is a key priority for the college, but despite increased vocational options, limited progress has been made to date in introducing a coherent foundation framework.
17. Partnership working is wide ranging and a key strategic aim of the college. Leaders and managers have been proactive in developing a very wide range of partnerships with schools and local colleges to ensure a positive transition programme for learners. There are very strong links with local special schools.

An excellent partnership with the local theatre offers creative opportunities for learners to develop performance skills and confidence, and meet up with learners from other providers.

18. Personal care support to learners is strong. Care plans are well developed and a full range of medical support, speech and language support, psychological and physiotherapy support is available. Referral to specialist agencies, including advocacy services, is appropriate and prompt. Behaviour management is good and, where appropriate, learners contribute to writing their own positive intervention and behaviour management plans. Support for communication is good. An increased number of communication therapy sessions is leading to improved awareness by learners of the triggers for their behaviour. As a result, several learners can manage their own behaviour better with the need for less intervention by support staff. Good, well planned levels of support exist for learners' to travel outside. Transition arrangements have improved since the previous inspection and are now good.
19. Learning support in lessons is effective. Learning support staff are well informed about learners and provide good support in sessions. In the best sessions learning support assistants offer carefully considered support, in close communication with the tutor. In a minority of lessons learning support is too intrusive, responding on behalf of the learners, before learners have had time to form their own response. This limits the development of learners' independence.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

20. Since the previous inspection the college has strengthened aspects of its personal support and transition arrangements, significantly enhanced its partnership working and improved the extent to which learners can take on responsibility and contribute to their community. Actions to bring about improvement in other aspects of the provision however, such as the quality of teaching and learning and individual learner target setting, have been far less marked.
21. The Principal and senior managers, along with the college's advisory board, have increased their focus on strategic, longer term planning. While strategic aims and targets for improvement are set adequately, not all of these are ambitious enough to encourage the college to aspire to the highest standards. The level of challenge provided by the advisory board has recently improved. The role of the advisory board in conjunction with the parent company in monitoring, challenging and supporting senior managers to help raise expectations within the college is, however, insufficient. The advisory board does not review its expertise or accountability formally to determine how it might best support and scrutinise the college's work.
22. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Travel training and behaviour management processes are comprehensive and contribute positively to increasing learners' autonomy. All staff have received basic safeguarding

training and safe working practices are promoted well through lessons. Individual risk assessments are thorough. The college's safeguarding team meet frequently but these meetings are not adequately recorded. Health and safety are monitored and recorded but they are not reported in a way that makes it easy for the college to take a clear overview or track patterns over time. All staff are checked for their suitability to work with vulnerable young people and adults and this information is recorded appropriately. Bullying is uncommon and learners are actively encouraged to discuss related topics openly at their learner forums.

23. Leaders and managers have increased the profile of equality and diversity successfully across the college. The celebration of different cultures, faiths and religions through the curriculum is mostly good. The planning of external events, such as learners' participation in national sports charities, is very inclusive, involving all learners and types of disability. The promotion of equality through lessons is improving although in several cases the planning of equality in lessons is overcomplicated and, as a result, is not always conducive in raising learners' understanding. The active promotion of other equalities' themes such as gender and sexual orientation are less prominent but developing. The college does not analyse the performance of different groups in sufficient detail or extract the key information to enable it to review, report or monitor any patterns or trends clearly. The college's equality plan that accompanies its single equality scheme is reviewed frequently. Since the previous inspection the college has been successful in increasing the proportion of male staff from 9% to 18%, to be more representative of its learner profile. The college assesses the impact of its policies and services on equality although often the assessment is too perfunctory.
24. Learners' involvement in decision-making is improving notably. Learner forums are well managed and learners are actively encouraged to speak openly. Feedback from individuals is sought frequently and used effectively to make specific individual improvements, such as changes to timetables or resources. The formal gathering of other user views, such as the views of parents and/or carers, and stakeholders, to help the college bring about improvement is less advanced.
25. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and identifies most strengths and areas for improvement. However, too much evidence within the report is anecdotal and some areas for improvement have been identified over several years. Quality improvement in too many aspects of the college's work is not sufficiently rigorous to enable managers to monitor performance as effectively as they could. While data is collected and presented, it is not sufficiently evaluated or reported in a format that is easy to interpret. This, along with a lack of precise success criteria in the quality improvement plan, makes it difficult for managers and the advisory board to gain a clear picture of how successful management actions have been. The college's process for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is well established. Observers make broadly accurate judgments about the quality of lessons and in identifying the strengths but are often less precise in identifying all the areas for improvement.

26. Since the previous inspection the college has improved the quality of its accommodation. Specialist resources are mostly good. Most staff are now appropriately qualified. A small number of staff have expertise in functional skills. The promotion of sustainability does not yet have a high profile in the college. Financial management is sound. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

Information about the inspection

27. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the college's vice principal as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, 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.

28. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the college. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Regent college

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 | 30 | 4 | 26 |
| Part-time learners | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall effectiveness | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Capacity to improve | 3 | | |
| Outcomes for learners | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning? | 3 | | |
| How well do learners attain their learning goals? | 3 | | |
| How well do learners progress? | 3 | | |
| How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development? | 3 | | |
| How safe do learners feel? | 2 | | |
| <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> | 2 | | |
| Quality of provision | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development? | 3 | | |
| How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users? | 3 | | |
| How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners? | 2 | | |
| How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve? | 2 | | |
| Leadership and management | 3 | | |
| How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation? | 3 | | |
| <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i> | 3 | | |
| How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners? | 3 | | |
| 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? | 3 | | |

*where applicable to the type of provision

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