

Sense College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 132011

Name of lead inspector: Charlie Henry HMI

Last day of inspection: 09 June 2011

Type of provider: Independent specialist college

Address: Sense College
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Information about the provider

1. Sense College is an independent specialist college (ISC) and is part of the national 'Sense' parent organisation, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, for deaf blind people. The college operates from eight resource centre sites across the east Midlands and the east of England. Seven of these centres currently have learners funded by the Young People's Learning Agency; some learners are jointly funded by local social services and a few from other sources. All the learners are deaf blind, hearing impaired or visually impaired. Most learners have profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities affecting their communication, emotional and behavioural development; most also have physical disabilities and require mobility support. Two thirds of learners are male; a very small number of learners are of minority ethnic heritage.
2. The college works to support the Sense vision, which is: 'Our vision is of a world in which all deaf blind children and adults can be full and active members of society'.
3. The college was previously inspected in March 2010 when the overall effectiveness of the college was judged to be inadequate, as was its capacity to improve. Leadership and management, and equality and diversity were inadequate. Safeguarding, outcomes for learners and quality of provision were satisfactory. Since this time there has been significant reorganisation and change at the college. A new principal and senior management team have been appointed and the management of the education provided at the resource centres has been placed under the responsibility of the principal.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Provision for young learners: Further education (16-18)	2 learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	28 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision		Grade 2
Capacity to improve		Grade 3
		Grade
Outcomes for learners		2
Quality of provision		2
Leadership and management		2
Safeguarding		2
Equality and diversity		2

Overall effectiveness

4. The college's overall effectiveness is good. The college has made good progress since the last inspection although these changes have not yet had time to show sustained improvement over time; consequently the college's capacity to improve is satisfactory.
5. Outcomes for learners are good. They enjoy college and make significant progress in communication skills and social development. These aspects improve their level of independence and ability to take part in community activities. Achievement of short-term targets and in meeting longer-term goals has improved.
6. Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is thorough and teachers use information effectively to set challenging individualised targets. Learning support assistants contribute well to ensuring that learning is effective. The new curriculum supports teachers well in planning individualised learning programmes. A wide range of enrichment opportunities extend learners' enjoyment and involvement with the community. Partnership working is satisfactory, with strong links with schools. However, partners do not contribute to evaluating the college's performance. Care, guidance and support are good. The individual care and support of learners is outstanding. Planning for learners' next steps as they leave college is underdeveloped.
7. Leadership and management are good. The new senior management team sets high standards and has successfully involved staff in improving the important planning and monitoring procedures. The newly-formed governing body understands its role well but it is not yet sufficiently informed to be as

challenging as it could be. All staff recruitment checks are carried out, as is training concerning the protection of children and vulnerable adults. The promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity have improved significantly since the last inspection. The college works closely with its learners, and their parents and carers, although liaison with next-step providers is not well developed. The self-assessment report is accurate; occasionally it is overly descriptive, rather than evaluative. Good use is made of resources.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Improved target setting and individual learning plans show the increased progress that learners make towards their longer-term goals. Learners make good improvements in their communication skills and social development, and, where necessary, in their behaviour.
- Learners increase their awareness of, and ability to take part in, community activities. Staff are effective at ensuring that learners are able to express their views about the college and they do so very positively. Learners enjoy college and feel very safe and well cared for.
- Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is thorough and used effectively to set individualised targets. Staff show very high levels of respect for the learners. Teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) and community facilities to plan motivating lessons. Learning support assistants contribute well to ensuring that learning is effective. In less successful lessons staff do not adequately monitor how well learners are learning.
- The new curriculum is effective in helping teachers plan individualised learning programmes. There is a good emphasis on improving communication skills and independence. The college is reviewing accreditation options to ensure learners' needs are best met. A wide range of enrichment opportunities contributes well to learners' enjoyment and their involvement with the community.
- Partnership working is satisfactory. There are strong links with schools and improving links with the wider community. Partnership is also growing with other specialist providers to share expertise. However partners do not contribute to evaluating the college's performance.
- The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The individual care and support of learners is outstanding. A wide range of specialists provide highly effective physical, mobility and psychological support. Arrangements for transition into college are very good. However planning for learners' next-steps as they leave college is underdeveloped.
- Leadership and management are good. The new senior management team has set high standards and has successfully involved staff in improving the consistency of important planning and monitoring procedures. Managers now have reliable data about the quality of the provision and learners' achievements and this is improving provision. More in-depth analysis of learners' performance and college quality is required to move the college still further forwards.

- The newly formed governing body understands its role well and is working closely with college and parent charity managers regarding the college's strategic direction. The governors challenge managers about the college's performance. However they are not yet sufficiently informed by whole college performance information to allow them to carry out the task as effectively as possible.
- The college takes great care to safeguard its learners and ensure that they feel safe. All required staff recruitment checks are carried out, as is training concerning the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Governors are routinely informed about matters relating to learners' wellbeing and safeguarding.
- Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in the promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity. All staff have been trained. The analysis of learners' achievements has established that there are no significant variations between the different groups of learners in the college.
- The college works closely with its learners, and their parents and carers, to monitor and improve the quality of provision. Liaison with next-step providers is not well developed and does not inform improvement planning.
- The self-assessment report accurately identifies the college's strengths and areas for improvement; occasionally it is overly descriptive, rather than evaluative. Self-assessment is increasingly being informed by the improved information provided by quality assurance monitoring.
- The college makes good use of its resources. Staff are well qualified. Resources and accommodation are generally of a high standard; the college is aware that one of its centres is not of the same high quality as the others and has plans to rectify this.

What does Sense College need to do to improve further?

- Managers and the governing body should analyse information about learners' progress in more detail so that they can raise standards still further by more effectively challenging performance and sharing best practice.
- Improve liaison and partnership, particularly with next-step placements, to evaluate the college's provision and inform curriculum and individual learning plans.
- Extend Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) accreditation opportunities where these are relevant and valuable, and in light of the developing Foundation Learning framework.
- Ensure that the quality of accommodation and resources is at a similar high standard at all of the college's centres.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the college and the staff
- making friends
- being able to do more things by themselves
- going out (into the community) to do things
- talking to staff.

What learners would like to see improved:

- going out (into the community) more often.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

8. Sense College has satisfactory capacity to make and sustain improvement. It has made good progress in the areas identified for improvement at its last inspection. However these developments are still relatively new and do not yet demonstrate sustained improvement over time. The college has a clear vision and has considered well its role in the changing landscape for specialist provision for learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There have been significant changes in the management arrangements for the college's resource centres, and the collection of information about the college's performance is robust and reliable. The college has accurately assessed its strengths and areas for further improvement and has appropriate management, staffing and resources to fulfil its plans. The college has been successful at involving all staff in the changes made over the last year, and, while the governing body is new, it has a good understanding of its role.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

9. Learners make good progress in developing communication skills so that they can better express their needs and aspirations. They use a wide range of methods, including eye pointing, signing the use of symbols and objects of reference, electronic communication aids and spoken language. Learners also make good progress in their social development and interact increasingly well with one another and with staff. They are very happy at the college and feel exceptionally safe and well cared for. They develop awareness and respect for themselves and others. Where necessary, very thorough analysis helps staff understand and modify learners' behaviour and as a result learners' make very good progress in managing their own behaviour.
10. Learners make good progress in acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills to develop their economic and social well-being. They become more aware of community activities and are successfully helped to make a positive contribution. Improvements in mobility and independent travel contribute well to learners' participation in a range of events, for example shopping, bowling, swimming and horse riding. The college has a thorough and wide-ranging learner involvement strategy, including through the learners' forum and from each learner's mentor, that ensures their views contribute to college development. Learners are encouraged to raise public awareness about disability and celebrate the achievements and contributions of people with sensory impairment. They use ICT effectively to contribute to the Education Resource Centres' newsletters.
11. Improvements in individual learning plans (ILPs) that clearly identify termly targets and achievements, including incidental learning, provide evidence of the good progress learners make relative to their prior attainment. These targets

are rigorously moderated to ensure they are challenging and relevant to learners' longer-term aims. Targets are much improved but a few are still too broad. Achievement rates of short-term objectives have increased from 62% to 80% across 2009/10. Similarly, destination data indicate that in 2008/09, 79% of leavers achieved their education or other specialist provision destination while in 2009/10 this had increased to 100%. In 2009/10 the number of leavers who achieved their external accredited course unit aims also increased. Retention and attendance are good but the college has yet to monitor punctuality effectively.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

12. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment processes are robust and identify learners' needs well, taking account of their longer-term goals. Assessment information contributes effectively to the improved ILPs and to lesson planning. Lesson planning in each of the college centres follows the same very detailed format. This supports the teacher to meet each learner's short-term targets and ensures that equality and diversity are considered in every lesson.
13. Most staff use a wide range of activities to motivate and engage learners and use their specialist expertise and experience well to enhance understanding. They gain learners' attention before attempting to communicate with them and make good use of ICT, such as interactive white boards and specialist communication aids. In better lessons teachers are creative and skilled in finding resources and strategies to develop learners' communication and functional sensory skills. Learning support assistants contribute well to ensuring that learners stay on task and learn effectively. Behaviour management is very good and staff-student interactions are characterised by very high levels of respect and dignity. In less successful lessons teachers do not adequately monitor how well learners are engaged and adjust the pace of the lessons accordingly, consequently the rate of learning dips. Learning environments were bright, welcoming and fit for purpose in six of the seven centres visited during the inspection.
14. Staff are appropriately qualified and have good expertise in the area of multi-sensory impairment (MSI) education. A high proportion of staff have achieved British Sign Language qualifications and all receive regular communication training. Teachers are encouraged to attend specialist forums and training such as the Augmentative and Alternative Communication Group organised by the East Midlands MSI network.
15. The college meets the needs and interests of learners well. It has developed a new curriculum framework that has increased individualisation of learners' programmes and progression routes towards their long-term goals. The emphasis within the curriculum is rightly placed on developing communication skills that enable learners to achieve greater levels of independence and improve their self-confidence. Developing an understanding of the 'world of

work' is also central and more links with employers and voluntary organisations have increased learning opportunities. The college is developing its response to Foundation Learning and is currently reviewing accreditation options that will ensure that learners have the opportunity to achieve nationally recognised qualifications, where appropriate. A wide range of enrichment opportunities add to learners' enjoyment and their involvement with the community.

16. The college makes satisfactory use of partnerships to ensure that learners are provided with a range of opportunities to broaden their experience. However partners are not formally involved in evaluating college provision. Links with schools are particularly strong. The college is part of a recently established specialist college peer development group which is leading to an increased sharing of good practice. It is also a member of the Peterborough City Council's Education Link Group which has led to increased sharing of expertise.
17. Care, guidance and support are good. The individual care and support of learners is outstanding. Initial multi-disciplinary assessment provides a detailed analysis of care and support needs. Transition into college remains a key strength with carefully planned and managed programmes that allow clear and supported progression from school. A wide range of specialists provide highly effective physical, mobility and psychological support. Learners' reviews have improved since the last inspection and learners are encouraged to participate. Next-steps planning is not sufficiently developed and the college does not seek the views of these providers to evaluate and improve its provision.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

18. The quality of leadership and management is good. There have been significant changes in the leadership and management of the college since the last inspection. These include relocating the line management responsibility for the college's eight resource centres to the principal and the college's new senior leadership team. The new senior management team has set high standards and expectations. They have successfully involved staff in all of the centres to establish consistent and improved practice across a wide range of important planning and monitoring procedures. These developments have also enabled the college to gain reliable information about the quality of the provision and learners' achievements. This has not only increased consistency across the centres but has also improved the quality of their work, for example in setting challenging learners' targets, and consequently has increased learners' progress. Data are now being collated centrally as part of a comprehensive quality improvement cycle and the college is in a much better position to analyse its effectiveness, consolidate its strengths and tackle areas requiring further improvement. This process has already had a real effect in improving the provision, for example in increasing the proportion of sessions where the quality of teaching is good or outstanding. However more in depth analysis of learners' performance and college quality is required to move the college still further forwards.

19. The newly-formed governing body understands its role well. It has appropriate plans to create sub-committees to support the work of the full group. Governors are working closely with college and parent charity managers in considering the strategic direction of the college. While the governors provide challenge to managers about the college's performance this is not yet sufficiently informed by whole-college performance information to allow them to carry out the task as effectively as possible.
20. The college takes great care to safeguard its learners and ensure that they feel safe. All required staff recruitment checks are carried out, as is training concerning the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Each centre has an appropriately trained designated person responsible for safeguarding. Very detailed risk assessments are carried out that identify the most appropriate strategies for staff to encourage learners' good behaviour and support their well-being. Governors are routinely informed about matters relating to learners' well-being and safeguarding.
21. There has been significant improvement in the promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity. Staff awareness training has been built upon by more detailed training relating to the promotion of equality and diversity in teaching and learning sessions. Curriculum and lesson planning routinely include these considerations. Managers have carefully analysed learners' achievement and established there are no significant variations between the different groups of learners in the college. This monitoring is now part of the annual quality assurance cycle. There has similarly been analysis of the staff profile and actions are being taken to try to remedy areas of under-representation, for example in the proportion of male staff.
22. The college works closely with its learners, especially through the learners' forum, and with their parents and carers to monitor the quality of provision. This has led to improvements, for example in extending the curriculum and enrichment opportunities to better meet learners' needs and interests. The college liaises well with special schools to ensure effective transition. Liaison with next-step providers is less developed and does not inform improvement planning.
23. The self-assessment report is accurate and identifies the college's strengths and areas for improvement although it still has a few areas that are overly descriptive, rather than evaluative. However self-assessment is increasingly being informed by the improved information provided by quality assurance processes. This information has become far more reliable following the substantial efforts made by managers and all staff to improve consistency across college centres.
24. The college makes good use of its resources and routinely considers how this can be improved. It provides good value for money. Staff are well qualified; resources and accommodation are generally of a high standard. The college is aware that the accommodation and facilities at one of its centres are not at the same high quality as the others and has plans to address this.

Information about the inspection

25. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the college's interim vice principal, as nominee, carried out the re-inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), 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.
26. Inspectors used individual interviews and telephone calls. They spoke to learners, staff, governors and partner schools. They also observed learning in a wide range of activities. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the college's resource centres.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Sense 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	2	28
Part-time learners	0	0	0
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	3		
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2		
How well do learners progress?	2		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
How safe do learners feel?	1		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a		
Quality of provision	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2		
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	2	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2		
<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?	2		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2		
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?	2		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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