

Hinwick Hall College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 133098

Name of lead inspector: Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI

Last day of inspection: 29 September 2011

Type of provider: Independent specialist college
Hinwick Hall College
Hinwick
Wellingborough
Northants
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Address:

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Information about the provider

1. Hinwick Hall College is an independent specialist residential college based in North Bedfordshire, close to the Northamptonshire border. The college is part of Livability, a Christian organisation which provides education and training for learners with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities including some complex communication, physical and learning difficulties. It provides both residential and non-residential programmes. All of the college's 39 learners are funded by the Young Persons Learning Agency (YPLA). Of these, 24 are residential. Most learners are aged between 19 and 24. Around two thirds of the student population are male and just over a third of students are of minority ethnic heritage.
2. The college offers a range of activities through three distinct pathways based on the development of life and work skills and includes creative arts, independence skills, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Pathway 3 is predominantly for learners with profound or complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities and is mostly a sensory-based curriculum. The college's mission is to provide the best possible education and training for young people who have exceptional learning needs brought about by physical, learning, communication and/or sensory disabilities'. Since the last inspection the college has had three principals appointed. In the summer of 2011 a new interim principal was appointed and is currently in post.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: Further education (16 to18)	 1 full-time learner
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	55 full-time learners

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

3. Hinwick Hall provides a satisfactory standard of education for its learners. The achievement of qualifications is high and qualifications are relevant to learners' intended destinations. Learners' generally succeed well against core targets, although their progress is not always maximised to its full potential because their individual targets are not always sufficiently precise or meaningful. In addition, while the quality of lessons is gradually improving across the college, inconsistency in the planning of lessons to best develop students' individualised learning remains.
4. Residential and day learners enjoy their time at Hinwick Hall. Due to a good range and quality of therapeutic support, most learners, particularly those with complex and profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good gains in the development of their communication skills. The college has broadened notably its work-related curriculum which is positively enriching the experiences available for learners to develop their independence skills and prepare them for life after Hinwick Hall. The college is aware these opportunities need extending further and firm plans are in place to extend partnership working in conjunction with this.
5. Since the last inspection, senior and middle managers have steadily strengthened a number of areas of the college's work despite an extended period of instability at senior leadership level. Significant shortfalls in governance and insufficient quality assurance processes have also been a barrier to the college making more rapid progress. Despite this, college managers have demonstrated the capacity to make steady improvements. In

some areas marked improvements have been made, such as in ensuring learners have a voice in the college and are encouraged to express their views frequently. The use of data to monitor performance has also improved notably but this is not yet sophisticated enough in its analysis and evaluation to help determine the full effectiveness of actions to improve. Learners' safety and well-being continue to have a high priority within the college.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Learners' achievement of accredited qualifications is high. They enjoy college and produce work to a good standard. Learners make satisfactory progress overall. Learners make good progress in developing their communication skills but the lack of relevant and precise learning targets makes their overall progress less easy to measure.
- The development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy are integrated appropriately into lessons but related learning targets are not always user-friendly or adapted well enough to apply to practical activities. Several learners move into positive destinations on leaving Hinwick, however, the monitoring and evaluation of this in order to demonstrate how well each learner progresses is underdeveloped.
- Learners develop satisfactory skills for independence. The sharing of learners' targets between residential and college provision has improved and is beginning to prove beneficial. The range of opportunities available to residential learners to develop their domestic and personal skills is good but these opportunities are more limited for day learners.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Communication skills are successfully integrated into lessons and staff are skilled at responding to the needs of learners with complex and profound learning difficulties. In too many lessons however, particularly within pathway 1 and 2, learning objectives do not match learners' individual needs and abilities well enough. As a result, learners' progress is not always maximised.
- The use of individual learner targets by which to assess progress is satisfactory. In many cases learners' progress is carefully monitored and recorded. The use of medium-term targets to gauge learners' progress towards their long-term destinations is in the early stages of development. In several cases, medium and long-term goals are not always specific enough.
- The curriculum meets learners' needs and interests satisfactorily. The curriculum for learners with extensive communication difficulties is good. Work-related learning enriches learners' experience and engages their interest. The college recognises opportunities for learners to access more substantial work experience placements needs increasing further.
- Advice, guidance and initial and baseline assessment are strong. Specialist therapeutic and medical support is very good. Specialist therapists contribute substantially to initial assessment and provide useful strategies for teaching

staff. Learners receive effective and reliable care in their college-based residential houses and flats.

- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The turbulence caused by a number of significant changes at leadership level within the college has been detrimental to the rate of improvement since the last inspection. Despite these difficulties, staff morale is positive and accountability at middle management level has increased.
- Governance is inadequate. The college's local governing body has been insufficiently rigorous in monitoring its own performance and the performance of the college. The board of trustees for Livability has been slow in identifying these issues. An interim governing body has been very recently formed but it is too soon to judge the full impact of these changes.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. Learners feel safe within the college's environment and their views and concerns are listened to and acted upon. Individual learner risk assessments are comprehensive. A wide array of health and safety data is recorded centrally, but it is not always presented in an easy-to-interpret format or evaluated thoroughly to monitor trends over time.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The monitoring and management of equality and diversity are now more cohesive across the college. Many learners show a good appreciation and understanding of individual differences and personal identity. Improvement targets within equality plans do not focus enough on the impact of actions taken. The college has been slow in completing and evaluating equality impact assessments.
- The effectiveness of self-assessment processes, including aspects of quality assurance, to bring about rapid and widespread improvement is inadequate. While a number of key areas of the college's provision have improved very steadily, the lack of clear, incisive evaluation has slowed down the rate of progress made overall across the college.

What does Hinwick Hall College need to do to improve further?

- Increase the progress that all learners make by ensuring learners' targets, including medium and long-term goals and those set for literacy and numeracy, are precise and relevant to practical sessions. In addition, ensure the links between residential and day learning are effectively reinforced and opportunities for day learners to extend their independence skills are expanded.
- Improve the planning of lessons by teachers and support staff to maximise learning, particularly but not exclusively on the pathway 1 and pathway 2 programmes. Ensure learning objectives are sufficiently varied to meet the needs and ability levels of individual learners.
- Ensure that the role of the governing body is strengthened significantly and can be self-sufficient by ensuring: clearer lines of accountability across all levels of governance; improved reporting to and training of governors; and improved

monitoring of Hinwick's strategic objectives and overall college performance against a set of clear, measurable key performance indicators.

- Strengthen the effectiveness of self-assessment and quality improvement processes in order to increase the overall rate of improvement across all aspects of the college's work. This includes: clearer and sharper reporting on the impact of actions taken; and a more precise and evaluative use of data to help the college review and monitor trends.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the music, horticulture and physiotherapy sessions
- the staff and the interaction with college staff
- enrichment activities
- working with other learners and in teams
- having their views sought and listened to.

What learners would like to see improved:

- an increased number of trips out in the evening.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

6. The college demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve. It has made satisfactory progress against most of the issues identified at the last inspection and has retained and built on its previous key strengths. Teaching and learning are steadily improving. Support for learners, previously satisfactory is now good and is contributing positively to learners' well-being. The overall rate of sustained improvement since the last inspection has been hindered by the numerous changes of principal, weaknesses in governance and by a lack of precision in key areas of quality assurance. Several of these areas have been strengthened very recently but it is too early to judge the full effectiveness of actions taken. The college's self-assessment report was largely accurate in its evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

7. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The number of learners achieving qualifications on a range of national awards is high and the standard of learners' work is good. Learners enjoy college and they are proud of their achievements. The progress learners make overall is satisfactory. The progress of learners' communication skills is good and enables them to express their needs and choices more clearly. Progress in other areas however, is less easy to measure and is sometimes hindered by the lack of precise and meaningful targets by which to measure small steps in learning.
8. The development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. It is most effective when linked to practical activities, such as shopping, accessing community amenities or making a phone call. Literacy and numeracy targets are often, however, expressed in ways that are not easily understood by learners or that do not relate directly to the practical skills undertaken by learners in lessons. The increased focus given to the development of work-related skills within the curriculum is steadily improving learners' literacy and numeracy skills as well as preparing them for the world of work. While several young people progress into supported housing and employment, the college recognises that the analysis and tracking of learners' destination outcomes is an area for further development.
9. The college analyses the performance of different groups of learners, although this has only recently become systematic. College data in combination with observations by inspectors indicate there are no significant variations in achievement by different groups of learners.
10. The development of learners' independence skills is satisfactory. The learning and skills developed by learners within lessons is beginning to be reinforced more routinely by staff within the college's residential setting. Residential

learners have access to a wide range of activities to help them develop useful domestic and personal skills, although this range of opportunities to increase skills for independence is less extensive for day learners.

11. Learners' general awareness of matters impacting on their health and well-being is good and enables them to make informed choices about their diets and exercise. The safety of learners is given a high priority and the college ascertains whether learners feel safe by using very sensitive methods to evaluate the extent to which learners with very limited communication can express their concerns. Learners know who to go to with any problems they may have. They feel more empowered to make choices and decisions impacting on their lives.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

12. Teaching and learning are satisfactory which matches the college's self-assessment report. The college has increased the rigour with which it monitors the quality of teaching and learning and this is leading to improvements in the consistency of lessons across the college. The effective development of learners' communication skills, good use of praise by teachers, and the use of alternative technologies to increase learner involvement, are positive features of most lessons. In addition, signing is used systematically by teachers to reinforce learning and the development of communication skills.
13. Lessons observed by inspectors were most effective when planning for learning was based on the learners' levels of ability and planned around their individual learning targets. In several lessons, particularly within the pathway 1 and pathway 2 curriculum however, learning objectives focussed too much on the criteria of accredited qualifications rather than on meeting learners' individual needs and levels of ability. Often in these cases, tasks proved too difficult for learners to complete without being given high levels of support and guidance. In some lessons, support staff required too much direction by teachers and at times this impacted on the flow and pace of learning and occasionally caused learners to become agitated. Any inappropriate behaviour by learners is handled satisfactorily.
14. Learners with profound and complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities follow a sensory curriculum tailored to their individual need and, where relevant, receive highly effective intensive interaction which helps them achieve the small steps of learning important in improving their independence.
15. Initial assessment is detailed and involves all staff across the college. This identifies effectively which curriculum pathway learners should follow and outlines the initial targets for learners to achieve. Staff closely monitor and frequently revise learning targets. Medium-term targets have recently been introduced to help monitor learners' progress between their short-term and long-term goals. The college recognises that currently not all medium and long-

term goals are specific enough or relate well enough to learners' shorter-term targets.

16. The sensory elements of the curriculum are very effective for learners with extensive communication difficulties. Teaching and learning take place in very small groups where learners receive high levels of individual attention. Programmes are flexibly conducted to accommodate learners' therapeutic needs. The work-related curriculum on pathways 1 and 2 enriches learners' experience and engages their interest. The majority of learners access some form of work experience, ranging from half an hour a day to three days a week. Learners with substantial work experience outside the college make good progress in adopting appropriate behaviour to meet the expectations of employers. The number of extended, longer-term work-related placements available are insufficient and this restricts the opportunities for some learners to extend their work-related skills as fully as they could. The range and frequency of enrichment activities has improved significantly recently and is now at least satisfactory.
17. The college specialist support services have established productive links with a range of therapeutic and medical services to the benefit of learners' health and well-being. The recent appointment of a senior manager to develop links with other bodies has led to a comprehensive action plan to develop relationships with other colleges in order to widen the curriculum offer. The implementation of this plan however is in its very early stages.
18. Care, guidance and support have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Specialist therapeutic and medical support is very good. A wide range of integrated services are available and include: speech and language, physiotherapy, aquatherapy, occupational therapy and behaviour therapy. Specialist therapists contribute substantially to initial assessment and provide strategies and on-going support to teaching staff. On-site medical provision from nursing staff and visiting doctors is very effective.
19. Learners receive effective and reliable care in their college residential house or flat. Arrangements to prepare for learners' transition from college have improved recently and are now satisfactory. Learners make very good use of alternative and communication technologies which aids their independence. Specialist speech and language therapy in particular benefits learners greatly and improves their ability to express their needs to staff and to interact more often with their peers.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

20. Several changes of principal since the last inspection have led to the college facing an extended period of turbulence within its senior management team. Despite these challenges, staff morale has remained positive and steady improvement has been made in a number of areas including teaching and learning. The recently appointed interim principal is providing good provisional

support for college managers prior to a permanent principal post due to begin early in the New Year. The college's overarching strategic objectives have been recently revised and are currently under review to determine a longer-term vision for the college.

21. Governance is inadequate. Until very recently the role of the college's governing body has been insufficiently rigorous in its monitoring of its own performance and the performance of the college. In addition, the board of trustees has been very slow to identify these issues, which include gaps in governors' training and a lack of involvement in key aspects of strategic planning. An interim governing body, a combination of existing and new governors including several trustees, has been formed to remedy these shortfalls. Plans for the current year, including more defined reporting arrangements, are clear and sharply focused. It is too soon however to judge the full impact of these recent changes.
22. The college provides a safe environment for its learners. Individual student risk assessments are comprehensive and reviewed frequently in order to ensure learners can work safely across a range of settings. Staff recruitment procedures are thorough. The college systematically records incidents, accidents and 'near misses' and other information relating to health and safety. In a number of cases however, the quality of this reporting and evaluation is not sufficiently comprehensive, making it difficult for managers and governors to spot any emerging patterns over time.
23. The monitoring and management of equality and diversity are now more cohesive across the college. The college's equalities committee reviews the impact of actions taken in this regard and has helped raise the profile of equality across the college. Targets within the college's equality-related plans, however, are too often process-orientated, rather than impact-focused which makes overall progress in this area difficult for managers to gauge. Through active encouragement, many learners develop a good appreciation of their own personal identity and of their own and others' beliefs and cultures. The use of equalities data has improved notably in regard to reviewing the performance of different groups, although this is not yet fully comprehensive or statistically meaningful in all areas. The college's board of trustees has been slow in completing equality impact assessments on policies and services. The promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum is satisfactory.
24. User engagement is satisfactory and improving. Learners' direct involvement in decision-making has increased markedly through a more structured approach to gathering individual and group views. Suggestions from learners, such as requests to increase the range of enrichment activities available, are acted upon swiftly by college staff. The utilisation of views of parents and other stakeholders are collated but their use in driving improvement routinely through self-assessment is less well established.
25. Self-assessment processes are very gradually increasing the involvement of staff at all levels in reviewing the quality of provision. While the college's own

judgements about its work broadly aligns to that of inspectors, the effectiveness of self-assessment processes to bring about rapid and widespread improvement, have often met with limited success. The use of data is now fairly extensive and used increasingly well by middle managers to collate information about provision. Data is not however always analysed effectively to evaluate how well something is working. Too often insufficient attention is given to the overall impact of actions taken to improve. As a result, and despite steady improvements, much provision remains satisfactory.

26. Accommodation is well maintained and specialist resources are deployed appropriately. Resources for students with complex physical and communication needs, such as bespoke bicycles, tricycles and electric wheelchairs to improve learners' mobility are good. Financial management is satisfactory. The college utilises rooms well within its main grade II listed building. Some corridors are narrow for wheelchairs to manoeuvre easily, although this is more noticeable in areas of the college, such as the social rooms, where it can get particularly busy at times. 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, telephone calls 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 areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Hinwick Hall 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	39	1	38
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?	2		
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>	3		
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?	3		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
Leadership and management	3	3	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>	4		
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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