

St Elizabeth's College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 132015

Name of lead inspector: Charlie Henry HMI

Last day of inspection: 24 May 2012

Type of provider: Independent specialist college

Address: South End
Much Hadlam
SG10 6EW

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Information about the provider

1. St Elizabeth's College was established in 2004 as part of St Elizabeth's Centre. It provides opportunities for learners, aged 18 to 25, who have learning difficulties and complex needs, including epilepsy, to develop the skills they need to move towards adulthood, long term supported independent living and more fulfilled lifestyles. The college's aim is for learners to move to supported living which may also include work placements, further learning and leisure activities. The St Elizabeth's Centre was founded by the Daughters of the Cross of Liege over 100 years ago and is located in Much Hadham near Bishop's Stortford in rural east Hertfordshire.
2. The college has a capacity for 37 learners. At the time of the inspection there were 35 learners on roll, with equal numbers of male and female learners and a slightly higher than the local area proportion of learners from minority ethnic heritages. All learners are residents at the Centre. The college provides education and training while accommodation is provided through tenancy links with a housing association. College learners have access to the Centre's health and therapy service and to social enterprise work placements.
3. The college's mission states that 'by the unquestioning expression of God's love we will work together to bring about the personal development of each individual'.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	36 full-time learners

Summary report

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

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

Overall effectiveness

4. The overall effectiveness of the college is satisfactory. It has satisfactory capacity to make and sustain further improvement. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. They enjoy their time at college and gain personal, social and independence skills that will be useful when they leave. They make good progress in learning to manage their own behaviour. Learners also make satisfactory progress in work-related and vocational skills. However the extent of these gains is unclear due to weaknesses in baseline assessment, target setting and the recognition and recording of achievements.
5. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is satisfactory. The literacy and numeracy curriculum is underdeveloped. Partnerships are used well to provide opportunities to develop learners' skills. Learners are cared for well and a wide range of specialist therapy and health care staff provide good support. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. There is a positive ethos and supportive culture for improvement. The college's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Equality and diversity are promoted well across the curriculum.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Learners enjoy their work and feel that they gain skills that will help them when they leave college. They learn valuable social and personal skills, however weaknesses in target setting and assessment make it difficult to evaluate the full extent of their progress and more able learners are not always sufficiently challenged.
- Learners are increasingly involved in their learning and make a good contribution to life of the college, including through the Learners' Council. They

also contribute well to the local and wider community by increasing awareness of disability and by their contributions to charity work.

- Learners feel safe. They use safe working practices and have a good understanding of the need to wear personal protective equipment when appropriate. They make good progress in learning to manage their own behaviour and need decreasing levels of support from staff.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is satisfactory. Learning activities focus well on increasing learners' independence. Assessment is underdeveloped. All students are assumed to be at the same starting level. As a result higher attaining students are challenged insufficiently, early in their programmes. Staff use questions skillfully to monitor learning in lessons. Literacy and numeracy are not sufficiently well integrated into all aspects of the curriculum.
- Learners benefit from the wide range of opportunities to develop work-related and independent living skills. Effective use of partnerships broadens learners' opportunities to develop skills in settings that are similar to their likely future activities. Good liaison with previous schools helps learners make a smooth transition into college. Close working with social enterprises and with a local housing association help ensure learners' needs are met. The newly formed Learner Council has started to make valuable suggestions to improve college provision.
- The quality of support, care and guidance for learners is good. They are cared for well and given appropriate advice to help them make decisions about their next steps. A wide range of specialist therapy and health care staff provide good support. Their work is carefully recorded although an analysis of this information is not linked to the effect on learners' progress.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Significant changes in the leadership and management of the college since the last inspection have slowed the implementation of improvement plans. Governors contribute very well to the vision for the college. They are involved in many of its activities and have a good understanding of the college's operation. Weakness in baseline assessment and information about learners' progress reduces their capacity to assess effectiveness and provide suitable challenge.
- The college places a high priority on safeguarding its learners and ensuring that they feel safe. Appropriate staff recruitment checks are carried out and all staff and governors receive appropriate training. Risk assessments are completed for learners and for the different college activities although these are not always brought together to consider individual learners' needs in specific activities.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well across the curriculum. Learners take part in many cultural events and the college liaises well with partners to increase their understanding of its work. The college's single equality action plan identifies important areas for development but does not set targets to reduce the differences in the progress made by different groups of learners.
- Self-assessment is satisfactory and provides the basis for improvement planning. The self-assessment report is thorough and is based on a wide range of information, however some strengths are overstated and the importance of some areas for improvement have not been sufficiently taken into account.

- Resources are generally of good quality. The most effective learning settings are similar to those that learners are likely to experience after leaving college. Most staff work across both care and education aspects of learners' programmes. This approach helps to ensure consistency. Managers are aware of the need to further develop the teaching and assessment skills of staff.

What does St Elizabeth's College need to do to improve further?

- Refine assessment processes so that learners' targets consistently take into account their prior achievements and their future skills development needs.
- Improve the assessment of literacy, communication and numeracy skills so that staff have a better understanding of learners' starting points, and use this information to improve planning for the development of these skills across all aspects of the curriculum.
- Ensure that all important aspects of learners' progress are recognised and recorded across all areas of the curriculum so that a full picture is provided of their gains in knowledge, skills and understanding to inform further planning and to celebrate their success.
- Make use of improved baseline assessment information and more frequent assessments of the progress made by learners in all aspects of their work to inform a more rigorous evaluation of college effectiveness.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- work experience
- going shopping
- going out for meals
- gym and swimming
- media and jewellery making
- being at college and everything about it.

What learners would like to see improved:

- being able to go out more
- more football and other activities.

Learners made very few suggestions about aspects of the college that could be improved.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

6. The college has made satisfactory progress in the areas identified for improvement at its last inspection. Data is analysed routinely to evaluate learners' progress although this analysis is not as effective as it could be due to remaining weaknesses in baseline assessment. Learners have increased involvement in their learning, for example through their reviews of their work during lessons and tutorials, and through the impact of the new Learners' Council. The literacy and numeracy curriculum remains underdeveloped; baseline assessment is not rigorous enough and the teaching of these skills is not embedded throughout learners' programmes. The college evaluates its quality and performance satisfactorily, although in some areas its conclusions are too positive. The monitoring of the quality of teaching occurs regularly but not frequently enough. The college has a clear vision about its purpose, is aware of the key areas for development required to achieve this and has plans to address them.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

7. Learners produce a very high standard of creative work, for example a learner won the "Best in Show" at Tate Modern's Disability Week exhibition recently. Most learners feel that they are learning the skills that will help them when they leave college. They develop useful work-related skills during their maintenance of a local football ground and in working in the horticultural social enterprise activity. They produce good quality items, for example soap and renovated furniture, to sell in the college enterprises.
8. Learners' files provide satisfactory evidence of examples of their progress, however it is difficult to measure the full extent of their progress as learning targets are frequently too broad. This weakness also limits the opportunity to collate, analyse and celebrate their achievements fully. Learners are increasingly involved in their learning, for example when reviewing their work during lessons and in their tutorial discussions. Their contribution to setting and reviewing their targets has also increased, although is not consistent or sufficiently frequent. The baseline assessment of literacy and numeracy is underdeveloped. Procedures to recognise and record learners' non-accredited achievements are not sufficiently effective. More able learners do not always receive sufficient challenge and continue to carry out activities which they can already do.
9. Learners greatly enjoy their learning and have good working relationships with staff. They generally work co-operatively with one another, for example fetching tea for their peers during a break in a work-related activity in the local town. Learners become increasingly more able to manage their own behaviour through systematic support from staff and specialist therapists. In a few cases learners are not punctual and this has a negative effect on the other members of the group, particularly for off-site sessions when group travel is involved.

10. Learners have a good understanding of safety and know when it is appropriate to use personal protective equipment, such as when taking part in horticultural activities. They benefit from the regular reinforcement of health and safety and e-safety in the curriculum and through their tutorials. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise.
11. Learners make a good contribution to their local community. They volunteer whenever there is opportunity, for example at a medical aids refurbishment warehouse. Learners recently worked successfully to tidy up their local village as part of a nationwide campaign to reduce litter. They help to produce a colourful and informative newsletter which details their achievements and interests. They fund-raise for a range of charities and plant flowers, in containers which they have decorated, near the local canal. The recently formed Learner Council has already contributed effectively to improving learners' experiences at the college, for example, in proposing to help with social and fund-raising events and then doing so. Council members promote increased awareness by engaging with the community through a local disability forum.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

12. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is satisfactory. Learning activities are focussed strongly on developing independence and usually engage learners' interests well. The use of assessment to monitor learners' progress and to inform planning is underdeveloped. Opportunities to develop learners' communication, literacy and numeracy skills throughout all aspects of their learning are frequently missed. Staff use questioning well to test learners' understanding and help them develop their thinking further. Learners receive good feedback on their work and consequently know when they have done well. Staff have good access to professional development opportunities and training which helps them to develop their practice. Teaching and learning observations provide some useful points for improvement, however, they are too infrequent. Some observation records provide too positive an evaluation of how well teaching has supported learning and how much learning has taken place. Weaknesses are identified but not addressed with sufficient urgency.
13. The college provides a wide range of useful work-related and independent living skills activities which involves all learners and gives them opportunity to gain valuable skills. Although learners have a wide range of attainment at entry to the college and very varying needs they are all initially assessed as being at entry level one. The college is aware that this restricts the challenge provided to the more able learners and has plans to improve initial assessment in order to provide a suitably challenging curriculum for all learners.
14. All learners have a personalised timetable that provides good opportunities to extend their knowledge, skills and independence through real and relevant activities, for example in independent living skills and money management. The college has accurately identified that the overly long lessons and the time needed to travel to some off-site activities results in too narrow a range of learning experiences for a few learners. The assessment of and curriculum for

literacy, communication and numeracy are underdeveloped and these crucial aspects of learning are not adequately embedded throughout learners' activities.

15. The college makes good use of partnerships to broaden learning opportunities in settings that are relevant to the learners' likely future activities, for example at a canal boat trust. There is good liaison with learners' previous schools to ensure information is received and to gain a good understanding of their skills as they enter the college. These links contribute well to learners' successful transition into college.
16. Learners are cared for well and given helpful and timely advice that enables them to make informed judgements about their futures. Support is provided by tutors and a range of specialist therapy and health care staff. Development plans are drawn up to meet the needs of each learner and these include personal and therapeutic goals. There is an effective transition process that supports learners who are moving on from the college to supported independent living. Multi-disciplinary teams meet regularly to share information and work together to promote learners' autonomy and personal development. Therapeutic interventions are meticulously recorded but analysis of this data is not linked to its impact on learners' progress. Parents and carers are kept informed about their son's and daughter's progress and their views and opinions are sought and used effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

17. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. There have been significant changes in the leadership and management of the college since the last inspection. A new principal was appointed in January 2012 following her temporary appointment for the previous term, however there has not been a vice principal in post since September 2011. This has slowed the implementation of the college's improvement plans.
18. There is a positive ethos and supportive culture for improvement in the college. The capacity for the college to set high expectations for all learners is restricted by limitations in the evaluation of their progress. The baseline assessment sets appropriate expectations for most learners. However, the college is aware that further development is needed for more able learners, and for literacy and numeracy, to establish accurate starting points for each learner from which targets can be set and from which progress can be evaluated.
19. Governors are supportive and contribute very effectively to the vision for the college. They are involved in many activities, including visiting during the college day and attending staff training. They have a good understanding of the college's policies and are involved in the self-assessment process. Weaknesses in information about learners' progress does not allow them to fulfil effectively their role in monitoring learners' achievements and, in so doing, provide support and challenge to college managers.

20. The college places a high priority on safeguarding its learners and ensuring they feel safe. The required staff recruitment checks are carried out and this information is stored effectively on a single central record. All staff and governors receive training regarding the protection of vulnerable adults and children. This training has been planned in liaison with the local safeguarding board and is updated annually. Staff are aware of how to respond if they have any concerns. Safeguarding is discussed routinely in management and governors' meetings. Risk assessments are completed for learners and for the different college activities although these are not always combined to consider individual learners' needs in specific activities.
21. Equality and diversity are promoted well through the curriculum and through the wide range of cultural events undertaken. Available information is analysed and has established that there are some differences in performance between different groups of learners. The college has a single equality action plan that identifies important areas for further improvement however this plan is not yet informed by the analysis of learners' progress and does not set targets to reduce the differences in performance. The college works well with a number of local partners to increase its profile and, especially, the understanding of disability and what the learners can achieve.
22. The college works closely with its social enterprise partners and a housing association to ensure learners' needs are met. Plans are being implemented to allow these providers to contribute to the evaluation of the college's provision. The recently formed Learner Council is starting to provide feedback to managers in order to influence the provision however it is too soon to judge its full effectiveness. Parents report positively about how staff listen to and act on their comments and feedback. There are developing links with a small number of colleges of further education, for example to assist in moderating the quality of teaching observations.
23. Self-assessment is satisfactory. It is informed by a wide range of information from learners, their parents, staff and others. The report is thorough and covers all of the key areas of the college's work. It is appropriately detailed and provides clear summaries of the key evidence upon which self-evaluation is made. However in a number of areas strengths are overstated and the importance of areas for improvement have not sufficiently informed judgements. The college's improvement planning is based firmly on this self-analysis.
24. Resources are generally of good quality and support learning well. The most effective resources are of very high quality. These are 'real' learning environments where learners can develop skills in a setting similar to those they are likely to experience when they leave college. These include the Windhill flats in Bishop's Stortford and the social enterprise activities, such as the horticulture at Ash Vale. Ambitious plans to improve resources through the building of a new college are nearing completion with new premises on the Centre's site due to open shortly.
25. Most staff work across both the care and education aspects of learners' programmes and are employed as independence tutors. This is a good

approach and ensures a consistency to the quality of learning and care. Managers are aware of the need to develop further the teaching and assessment skills of these staff to ensure that the approach reaches its full potential. The small number of qualified teachers support these staff to set targets and plan the work.

Information about the inspection

26. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the college's 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.
27. Inspectors used group and individual interviews to gain the views of learners. They also looked at questionnaires learners had recently completed for the college. They observed learning sessions across a wide range of the college's provision, as well as assessments and progress reviews.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
St Elizabeth's 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	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	36	36
Part-time learners	0	0
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	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	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?	3	
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?	2	
Quality of provision	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	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3	
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?	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?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
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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