

St John's College

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates		24–26 October 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- The majority of learners develop much-improved social and communication skills.
- A good proportion of learners move on to meaningful supported living, further education and/or work of some type when they leave the college.
- Teachers use their knowledge and skills very successfully to teach an improved curriculum and support learners, so they produce good standards of work.
- Specialist therapists and teachers work together very effectively to identify learners' individual needs when they first join the college, and to develop their core skills right through to the time they leave.
- The college is led and managed well. Senior managers have shown great skill in making many changes and improvements since the last inspection. Very effective monitoring arrangements ensure that teaching is consistently good.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, but the majority of lessons are not yet outstanding.
- The staff do not have sufficient skills and knowledge to provide good and impartial information, advice and guidance.
- The targets set for learners in subject areas are not as clear and precise as they are for core skills.
- Not all staff use language and resources that are appropriate for the age of the young adults they teach and support.

Full report

- **What does the provider need to do to improve further?** Improve the identification and recording of subject targets to make them clear, precise and meaningful to learners, so they understand better what they need to do to achieve them.
- Improve staff skills in giving impartial and more appropriate information, advice and guidance to learners, so they are able to make well-informed choices about courses, other learning opportunities and their future career goals.
- Provide training for all staff to improve their understanding of how to implement equality and diversity across all learning activities, so they have a clearer understanding of how to use communication and resources that are more appropriate to the age of the learners.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Learners make considerable progress in developing very effective communication skills. This increases their confidence and maturity, and enables them to apply these skills very effectively in social situations and work settings.
- When learners are ready, their employability skills improve significantly through a good range of work experience placements within the college, the community café, the new social enterprise printing retail shop, and with local employers.
- Learners make good progress in achieving external accredited qualifications through a much-improved curriculum. The majority of learners successfully achieve qualifications for life and living skills and develop much-improved literacy and numeracy skills.
- The college routinely collates and analyses the performance of all learners, and the resulting information clearly shows that there is no significant difference in achievement between different groups of learners in relation to gender or ethnicity. The college has worked very effectively to narrow the achievement gap for learners who have more complex needs.
- Learners' progression into supported living or work of some type is good. Within the second year of the new curriculum, learners have started to move on to higher-level courses and an increasing number are now doing so when they leave. Learners do not, though, have sufficient opportunities to extend their independence through a formal structured travel training programme.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Good teaching, learning and assessment ensure that all learners make substantial progress. Teachers, therapists and support staff are highly motivated to support and develop learners' skills and understanding, and have very high expectations of what learners can achieve.
- All staff use behaviour management techniques very well and develop learners' ability to manage their own behaviour; although, on rare occasions, the more dominant learners limit the learning possibilities of quieter students.
- Teachers plan learning well for individual learners to build on their different strengths and interests and to maximise their progress. Teachers use questioning techniques very effectively to help learners to think, to recall what they have learnt and to reinforce new learning.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is good. Newly refurbished learning environments are stimulating and teachers use space imaginatively to meet each learner's needs.

- Speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and counsellors collaborate very effectively with teachers and support staff to provide the best possible learning experience for learners. Therapists work alongside teachers in modelling strategies and resources that develop learners' skills very well.
- Initial assessment is comprehensive and thorough, and therapists work closely with teachers to design learners' core targets around communication, collaborative working and behaviour management. This is particularly helpful to both teachers and learners.
- The college recognises that targets relating to learners' accredited programmes are less effective. Targets are often too broad to be helpful, or use the difficult language of the examination boards. Some targets in independent living qualifications are for domestic skills learners clearly already have, whilst others have no end date recorded for achievement of these skills. The college is developing an electronic recording system to share targets between college and residences and to record progress in a timely way, but it is not yet effective.
- Teachers and support staff give frequent, positive and encouraging verbal feedback in lessons on learners' progress. A culture of learners evaluating their achievements helps them to assess their own learning, and to develop the skills to observe other learners' progress and give them positive feedback. Teachers make particularly useful and constructive written comments on learners' work in English and mathematics and on accredited courses, for example in art and design.
- Teachers develop English, mathematics and functional skills well, and their work on communication skills and signing is particularly effective. Specialist teachers provide stimulating teaching in discrete English and mathematics lessons. The integration of numeracy in practical skills classes, such as community food production and construction, works well in developing learners' skills in practical contexts. The introduction of early counting skills in sensory ICT for learners who have very complex needs is very effective, and learners' literacy develops well in humanities classes through reading unfamiliar material.
- Information, advice and guidance require improvement. The information given to learners and their parents before entering college is useful, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the newly improved transition arrangements. No member of staff has the qualifications or skills to provide specialist advice and guidance about learners' possible next steps after college.
- The college promotes equality and diversity well through a culture of respect for learners throughout the organisation. Learners feel confident about reporting instances of discrimination or inappropriate use of language to senior managers, and know that staff will act on these immediately. Lesson plans record how teachers go about promoting the understanding of equality and diversity in lessons, but occasionally learning activities or ways of speaking are more suited to a much younger age group.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- All managers and staff share a clear and challenging vision for developing the college's provision. Senior staff consistently communicate their high expectations for improvement, and have used highly effective strategies to manage the many changes they have made over the past two years.
- Since the new management structure was established, the governance of the college and accountability of senior managers are much improved. Trustees and governors now take an active role within the college, visiting regularly to meet with staff and learners and systematically challenging managers to account for the college's performance. A student governor, elected by their peers, now represents learners' views at governor meetings.
- Managers keep a close check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and improve them where necessary. As a result, teaching has improved and more lessons are now good or better. Staff are well qualified and experienced, although no member of staff has qualifications in information, advice and guidance.

- Teaching resources are excellent. The teaching spaces have been refurbished to a high standard, and all have ICT facilities. Learners make good use of industry-standard resources such as the music recording studios and the newly-opened printing retail outlet to develop vocational skills and related qualifications.
- The much-improved self-assessment process systematically includes the views from all staff, learners, parents and partners. Each team carries out a thorough assessment of its own provision, which then clearly informs the overall self-assessment report. The latest draft, based on the new Common Inspection Framework, is suitably self-critical and largely reflects the judgements made by inspectors.
- Quality improvement procedures have improved significantly. The college has very effective systems to monitor the performance of all aspects of the provision. Managers make appropriate use of data to monitor and manage performance. The number of learners who gain the skills and qualifications to take them onto the next stage when they leave college has risen markedly.
- The college promotes equality and diversity well and makes it clear that bullying and discrimination are not tolerated. An equality and diversity group meets regularly and identifies actions for improvement, although it did not identify the need for staff training to ensure all staff use appropriate age-related communication and resources.
- The college collates and analyses data well relating to gender, age, ethnicity and disability of both staff and learners. Clear targets are set where there are imbalances. For example, a target has been set to increase male care staff by 40%. Senior managers acted quickly and very effectively to adapt the site, so that the whole campus is accessible to disabled learners, staff and visitors.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

St John's College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Foundation Learning
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

Provider details

Provider name	
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 73
	Part-time: 0
Principal/CEO	Mark Hughes
Date of previous inspection	November 2009
Website address	www.st-johns.co.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	6	60	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of community learners	1							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Diane Stacey HMI
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One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the assistant director as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and on-line questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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