

Royal College Manchester

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates		3 – 5 July 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Outstanding-1
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Outstanding-1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding-1
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Outstanding-1

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is outstanding because:

- Students with a range of complex and profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress in developing their communication skills and their ability to stay calm and better manage their own behaviour.
- Students achieve a high level of their personal targets, which are broken down into small steps in learning to provide appropriate challenge across all aspects of their programme.
- Where appropriate, students make excellent progress in gaining independent living skills, and a good understanding of workplace expectations, safe working practices, travel and coping skills.
- Exceptionally well-planned and enthusiastic teaching ensures an outstanding learning experience, meets students' individual needs very well and provides a range of excellent opportunities for students to develop their communication skills.
- An extensive range of highly specialist therapists work very effectively with teachers and support staff to ensure students can participate fully and gain the maximum benefit from their learning.
- Strategies to support the development of students' communication, behaviour management and independence skills are outstanding.
- Leaders and managers provide very high expectations for staff and an excellent focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment.
- The curriculum is excellent and provides an extensive range of learning opportunities that meet the individual needs of students very well.
- Strong partnerships with a range of local organisations are used very effectively to enhance learning resources, improve facilities and extend the curriculum.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all action plans arising from teaching and learning observations are sufficiently detailed and precise in order to increase further the proportion of outstanding lessons.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes for students are outstanding. Students make outstanding progress in developing their communication skills and their ability to exercise choice, express their opinions and engage in learning. They extend their use of communication through a wide range of strategies, including signing, symbols, pictures, communication aids, tablet computers, mobile technology, objects of reference and information learning technologies (ILT). All students respond very positively to the wide range of highly interactive learning experiences to develop their communication skills to their full potential. ▪ Students make excellent progress in developing their personal and social skills. An increasing ability to manage their own behaviour enables students to participate in a wider range of college, community and work-related activities. One student was able to use his communication aid to express calmly his anxiety on a bus when the noise levels increased and to ask to go downstairs where it was quieter. ▪ A large majority of students are enrolled on a relevant accredited learning course and achievement rates are high. Numbers achieving accreditation have increased steadily over the last three years. Those on supported external placement gain a good understanding of workplace expectations and make excellent progress in safe working practices, travel and independence skills as well as extending their communication and coping skills. Students who are not yet ready for external work placement develop their communication and social skills very effectively through onsite opportunities, such as the college café, recycling projects, snack preparation and mail delivery. ▪ Students make excellent progress towards achieving their planned learning and independence goals. Targets are broken down into small steps in learning to provide appropriate challenge and cover all aspects of the student's programme including communication, behaviour and independence. Staff make detailed and evaluative assessment of students' progress against their targets at the end of each lesson. A clear grading framework is used to ensure consistency and accuracy. A rigorous review process monitors and improves the quality of target setting throughout the year. ▪ The college collates and reviews the performance of all students each term and quickly identifies underperformance. In 2011, the college identified underperformance by students on the autistic spectrum and took successful action to rectify this. Current data indicate that there is no significant variation in achievement between different groups of students in relation to disability, gender or ethnicity. ▪ Students' progress and achievement of their long-term goals is excellent. Progression into employment has improved significantly over the last three years. The number of students progressing into paid, voluntary and self-employment in the current year is outstanding. The number of students progressing into supported living has increased in recent years. Attendance and punctuality are very good. 	

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding and ensure that students make significant progress towards achieving their learning goals. Teachers, therapists and support staff are highly skilled and very enthusiastic. They are ambitious in their expectations of what students can achieve and provide regular well-planned challenges for students to extend and enhance their skills.
- Staff know their students very well. They observe the often small physical gestures made by students and interpret them correctly so avoiding the frustrations that can escalate into difficult behaviour. Teachers, learning support assistants and therapists encourage and enable students to make increasingly complex choices that provide them with some control over their immediate environment.
- Very effective strategies for establishing students' starting points are in place and implemented thoroughly. Pre-entry assessment is comprehensive and establishes a secure baseline from which to plan each student's individual programme and set appropriate targets for learning and independence. The assessment, monitoring and recording of students' progress is good. Teachers and support staff accurately track students' achievement and progress in lessons and throughout the students' time in the college.
- The range of well-planned opportunities for students to develop their communication skills across the curriculum is outstanding. The consistent and flexible application of communication strategies is excellent and tailored to individual needs. The use of visual time lines ensures that college routines are understood and helps students with profound and complex disabilities to maintain focus. Signing and the use of symbols and photographs to establish meaning is very effective. Excellent use is made of assistive technology in supporting learning, improving communication and enabling students to make choices. Using their enhanced communication skills many students are supported to take some control in their lives.
- The college makes excellent use of internal and external work experience. A good range of real commercial placements provide very good environments where students make excellent progress in developing their work preparation and communication skills. In one large company's staff restaurant, the catering team provide relevant and challenging tasks. The staff team has voluntarily learnt basic sign language to improve their communication with students.
- The management of behaviour for those students who show high anxiety is outstanding. All staff are systematically trained in the use of calming strategies. They use well-designed behaviour plans to ensure that students who need significantly more personal space than their peers are still able to take part in learning. On those few occasions when students become distressed, staff have clear strategies to defuse students' anxiety and help them return to learning quickly.
- The provision of specialist therapeutic support is excellent. A wide range of therapy interventions is provided both in and out of classrooms. Thorough assessment of students' needs form the basis for some imaginative and very effective specialist programmes. Therapists work alongside teachers to integrate strategies and therapy resources so enhancing students' skills very well. Following an extensive therapeutic programme across the education and care setting one student is now able to stand upright for the first time in eight years.
- Support for students is outstanding. Support staff, and occasionally volunteers, build excellent relationships with students and their high level of expertise enables students to be fully and actively engaged throughout lessons. Support staff show initiative and flexibility, identifying students' need within a class and taking appropriate action. Each student has a key worker who provides effective advocacy, advice and guidance throughout their time in college.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is very good. The flexibility of the curriculum, of teaching styles and support to meet the needs of each individual, all ensure that learning is always inclusive. The college uses the cultural and linguistic skills of the staff well to help students engage with activities. Students are routinely presented with many ways to appreciate and celebrate difference through music, taste, smell and colour.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leadership and management are outstanding. Managers and governors have established a clear long-term strategy and detailed business plan which sets challenging targets for improvement. Leaders are strong in their vision for the college to be outstanding and are supported well by staff. The day-to-day management of the college is excellent and the quality of provision is outstanding.
- The recent staff restructure has promoted a strong culture of high aspiration and ambition. Key performance indicators are used very successfully for each area of the college and are rigorously monitored. The honest and consultative communication style of senior managers is valued greatly by staff. The strong multidisciplinary approach provides a high quality learning experience for the students.
- Governors provide strong oversight of the college provision. Subcommittees support the college very well in staffing, finance and quality improvement. Governors and leaders have worked together very effectively to set challenging improvement targets. Progress against these targets is monitored rigorously. Governors have a sound understanding of the college's current strengths and areas for development and use their broad range of strengths very well to secure continuous improvement across all aspects of the provision.
- Performance management is excellent. Arrangements to improve teaching and learning and to manage staff performance are robust. The focus on improving standards is highly effective and has led to significant gains in students' outcomes and an increasingly high proportion of good and outstanding lessons. The regular supervision of staff and the monitoring of teaching and learning very successfully support staff to improve their practice. Appraisals are based on challenging performance indicators that link closely to the robust targets set by the senior leadership team. A strong focus on ensuring greater accountability permeates all levels in the college.
- Observations of learning and feedback to staff very clearly focus on improving the students' experience. Most action plans arising from individual lesson observations are comprehensive and checked systematically. However, a few action plans are insufficiently detailed or lack precision. Managers' expectations are high, and where improvement in the quality of lessons is slow, they have implemented competency procedures. Professional development is extensive and ensures that all staff have the benefit of learning from innovative ideas and sharing best practice.
- The curriculum is excellent and provides an extensive range of learning opportunities. Students are placed on courses appropriate to their level and need. The very effective multidisciplinary working around the needs of students ensures that programmes are modified very responsively according to individuals' changing circumstances. Partnerships with a range of organisations, including employers, charities and community services are used very effectively to enhance learning resources, improve facilities and extend the curriculum. The well-supported student council participates in staff recruitment and selection of resources, and helps to shape the curriculum and onsite health and safety practice.
- Self-assessment and quality assurance processes are rigorous and very effective at systematically improving the quality of provision. Managers are adept at evaluating performance in their areas, although the college recognises the need for further development to ensure consistency of practice. The self-assessment process is used effectively to review and update the curriculum annually and incorporates performance data, staff views and students preferences.
- Equality and diversity are promoted very well. An atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect pervades the whole college. Staff are very responsive to the needs of the students and work effectively to help them overcome learning and communication barriers. The college has reviewed and updated its recruitment procedures and the subsequent staff profile indicates increased numbers in previously underrepresented groups.

- Health and Safety is prioritised successfully to incorporate the needs of students; roles and responsibilities in this area are reviewed regularly. Risk assessments are thorough, reviewed regularly and highly individualised. The college demonstrates an inclusive approach in all aspects of its work.
- The college has a strong focus on safeguarding and rigorous systems are in place; it meets its statutory requirement for safeguarding students very well. A safeguarding mobile phone number is available around the clock. An innovative approach, known as 'behaviour watch', is used to record, monitor and analyse behaviour incidents so staff are able to manage interventions for students very effectively. The Trust operates an independent safeguarding board, which provides the governance framework for safeguarding.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Royal College Manchester

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	19+ Learning programmes
Overall effectiveness	1	1
Outcomes for learners	1	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	1	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management	1	1

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Overall curriculum grade	1

Additional socio-economic information

Royal College Manchester is an independent specialist residential and day college catering for students with severe and complex difficulties. There are a number of learners with autistic spectrum disorder and multisensory impairment; all learners have communication needs and many present with challenging behaviour. Nine of the current learners are from ethnic minority heritage. The college is part of the Seashell Trust and is located on a large site in Cheadle, Manchester, which it shares with Royal School Manchester.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Margaret Hobson HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Head of College 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 and online 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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