

# Bridge College

## Independent specialist college

<b>Inspection dates</b>		18–20 September 2013
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
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:

- Learners make very good progress in developing their confidence, communication skills, independence and ability to make choices for themselves.
- The college has an excellent team of therapists who help learners to access and make the most of their learning.
- Highly effective teamwork between teachers, support staff and therapists ensures that teaching, learning and assessment are good in most classes and outstanding in a few.
- The standard of accommodation and resources to support learning are excellent.
- The Principal sets a clear vision, based on high expectations for staff, and staff support recent changes to improve further the learners' experience.
- The college works very well with families and community services to ensure learners' skills are sustained when they leave college.

#### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- A minority of lessons are not well planned or delivered and learners' progress is limited.
- The systems for setting learners' targets and recording their progress are too complex to be fully effective.
- The college does not do enough to check whether there are any differences in the rates of progress made by different groups of learners.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- In a minority of classes, teachers need further training in how to manage staff teams to ensure all learners make at least good progress. Also, in these lessons managers should check that the planned teaching and learning activities are appropriate to the needs of the learners.
- By the end of 2013 the college should check the effectiveness of recent changes to systems for recording learning to ensure that learners' overall progress is recorded more clearly.
- The governing body should ensure that trend data on the achievement of different groups of learners are collected and analysed more systematically.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- The large majority of learners are making good progress towards their personal goals to develop the social and communication skills which they need for their future lives. Learners enjoy coming to college and are keen and enthusiastic in sessions. Attendance is very good.
- The development of personal skills and independence for learners is good. Learners demonstrate increased maturity and improved social skills since attending the college. Many are able to carry out personal care and living skills more independently, such as preparing their own drink for the first time.
- A significant strength of the college is the effective development of learners' communication skills. Learners generally interact well with others and where appropriate contribute to group discussions and activities. This is enabled through skilful use of technologies, such as speech-generating devices. Learners exercise personal choice within a range of contexts, for example when they need a break or choosing topics for activities.
- For many learners their increased independence is impacting positively on their lives at home as they communicate better and manage their own behaviour more effectively. Many learners continue with college interests at home, such as gardening.
- Learners that work towards externally accredited qualifications achieve well. In 2012/13 the success rates across all courses were high. Learners have access to a range of qualifications that accredit both their personal and vocational skills development, such as English speaking, art and design, and a national volunteering award. They showcase their skills at prestigious arts venues.
- Learners improve their employability skills through work experience where appropriate or by participating in an enterprise activity. They learn to adapt to new environments and follow routines and instructions. Learners' confidence and self-esteem improve through meeting and working with new people. However, the skills that learners develop in these contexts are not always formally recorded to contribute to their longer-term learning goals.
- Learners improve their understanding of how information and communication technology can be used to support their personal interests and their learning. One learner uses a video and voice-over device to support a learning project about fashion, and another uses the internet effectively to find out about their favourite football club and keep up to date with the latest player news.
- The number of learners continuing with some form of education when they leave college is good. A few learners gain voluntary work and supported-employment places in community environments such as cafés and day centres. This progression is not suitable for all learners. However, the college recognises it should increase its contact with employers to widen opportunities.

**The quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Good

- Most lessons are carefully planned to help learners make progress. Teachers, support staff and therapists work together very effectively to support learning. They have high expectations of what learners can achieve and provide skilful support to enable them to succeed. In a minority of lessons, the team is not managed well, planning is poor and it is not clear what students are supposed to be learning.
- Good use is made of communication aids to support learning. Staff use signing, visual clues, such as symbols and photographs, and interactive technology to establish meaning and intent. Feedback to learners is instant and motivates them to try hard. Feedback encourages learners to communicate effectively what they enjoy and which activities help them to learn. In a trampoline session the learner was helped to work independently and develop coordination skills through mirroring the teacher's body movements.
- Good use is made of excellent specialist accommodation and resources to plan interesting lessons. Professional standards are encouraged in catering lessons for example, and learners respond enthusiastically to the challenging activities. In a catering session observed during the inspection, learners became aware of the need for good hygiene when handling food and the appropriate tools to use. They thoroughly enjoyed their learning and their developing confidence was obvious.
- Thorough assessments of learners' needs form the basis for imaginative and effective teaching and learning in most lessons. The inspection took place in the first week of timetabled activities and inspectors were impressed by how well the assessment of new learners was implemented. This enabled new learners to engage with learning quickly and work alongside returning students.
- Successful lessons owe a lot to the way in which therapists and nursing staff work alongside teachers and support staff to assess which strategies and resources help individual students to learn. Where learners become anxious about new situations, staff use 'time out' strategies to defuse anxiety and help the learner return to learning as quickly as possible. A therapist's input was instrumental in identifying that a new learner works much better when wearing ear defenders as he is particularly sensitive to noise levels.
- Targets are monitored and reset; however, learners' progress is recorded in a variety of documents. This does not enable the overall progress of each learner to be easily reviewed. A new system is being introduced to simplify and sharpen progress recording but it is too early to see how well it will work.
- The understanding of everyday English and numeracy is developed successfully in specialist functional skills lessons. However, these skills are not reinforced enough in other lessons so that learners make as much progress as they can.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Home and school visits, and college taster sessions, help new learners to make a smooth transition into Bridge. Visits help staff to build up a picture of each learner's existing skills, interests and sensitivities and this is used well to plan their college programme. The college works extensively with families and community services in the learners' home areas throughout their time at college and this helps them to sustain skills when they leave Bridge.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners' understanding of other cultures is promoted through activities such as dance and fashion shows, as well as community visits. Links with other organisations, such as a visit by students from a Jewish college, help learners to learn more about each other's traditions. Bridge is characterised by a culture of respect for the individual and learners are taught well to show respect for themselves and for others.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Good

- Strong leadership and management have steered the college successfully through a period of turbulence. Relocation of the college, the appointment of a new Principal and several staff changes have all taken place within the last year. During this upheaval, the learners' experience has continued to be the first priority and the quality of education learners receive is good.
- A new vision sets out clearly the future priorities for the college. Communication between staff and managers is good, and staff support changes brought in by the Principal to improve further the experience of learners.
- Managers monitor teaching and learning effectively. Last year's assessment of the quality of lessons led to an increase in the number of qualified teachers in the current year and this has resulted in an increase in the proportion of good or better lessons. Also, therapists now work more in the classrooms rather than taking learners out for assessment and support.
- Staff are appropriately qualified and extensive training helps them to keep up to date and develop their skills further. A particular strength of the college is the range of specialist therapists it employs. Accommodation and resources to support learning are excellent. The new accommodation is purpose built for the needs of these learners.
- Quality improvement processes are effective. The self-assessment report for 2012/13 provides a highly self-critical analysis of ways in which the college can improve further. Inspectors saw how actions taken as a result are benefiting learners in the current year.
- The views of stakeholders are integral to self-assessment and quality improvement. Parents contacted during the inspection spoke highly of the college's communication with them, staff commitment and the progress being made by their son or daughter.
- The link between monitoring of teaching and learning and the appraisal system is not strong enough. A new system aims to ensure that where support is put in place to improve poor teaching, its impact is monitored more quickly and further action taken where necessary.
- The governing body provides an effective balance between support and challenge for the senior leadership team. Clear targets are in place against which they are appraised. The board is in the process of linking individual members with specific aspects of the college, such as curriculum, in order to strengthen further their monitoring role.
- The curriculum successfully provides for the needs of individual learners. Changes this year offer more flexibility and learners like the additional choice this gives them. Good partnership work benefits the learners. For example, one learner has chosen to spend three days a week at Bridge and two at The Manchester College. Staff make effective links with community practitioners where the learners live to help continuity of care when they leave college. Work placements are enhanced by partnerships, such as the one with a premier league football club. However, the college recognises the need to strengthen links with employers.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place and the college meets its statutory requirements to safeguard learners and health and safety is promoted well with them. For example, they practise independent living skills in the college flat to develop their awareness of 'stranger danger' when answering the door and using an intercom.
- Equality and diversity are also promoted well with learners. Managers monitor some aspects of data to check if there are any differences in achievement between groups of learners but this is not sufficiently comprehensive. Data show there is no difference in retention and achievement of qualifications in terms of gender, race or different disabilities but the college does not analyse learners' overall progress in this way.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Bridge College

<p>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</p> <p>1: Outstanding                  2: Good                  3: Requires improvement                  4: Inadequate</p>	Overall	19+ Learning programmes
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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Overall curriculum provision</b>	<b>2</b>

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Independent specialist college							
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+							
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: 86							
	Part-time: 4							
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mrs Lisa Duncalf							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	March 2008							
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.togethertrust.org.uk/education/bridge-college">http://www.togethertrust.org.uk/education/bridge-college</a>							
<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Full-time</b>	0	96	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Part-time</b>	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>								
<b>Full-time</b>	N/A							
<b>Part-time</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ None</li> </ul>							

## Contextual information

Bridge College offers day provision for learners with severe and complex learning difficulties, physical disabilities and autistic-spectrum conditions. The college works under the auspices of the charity 'Together Trust'. The college moved to new purpose-built premises in 2012 and is co-located with one of The Manchester College campuses. The college mission is to create a learning environment that is inclusive and where young people make a successful transition into adulthood by increasing their self-esteem, independence and skills for life.

## Information about this inspection

**Lead inspector**

Sue Harrison HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the college's quality manager 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 online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and parents; 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.

## 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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