

David Lewis College

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates		20-22 March 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 wide range of complex and, in some cases, profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress in developing their ability to make choices and participate in learning.
- Learners achieve a very high proportion of their personal targets, which are skilfully designed to be challenging but realistic.
- Where appropriate, learners make excellent progress in gaining independent living skills, and an understanding of the world of work.
- Enthusiastic and exceptionally well planned teaching ensures a high-quality learning experience that meets the needs of individuals.
- An exceptional range of high quality therapists and specialist support staff work very effectively with teachers to ensure students can gain the maximum benefit from the learning experiences.
- Strategies to support the development of learners' communication and behaviour management skills are outstanding.
- Leaders and managers provide very clear expectations for staff and there is a relentless focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment.
- The curriculum provides an excellent range of pathways for learners' different needs and it is sufficiently flexible to adapt to the changing needs of individuals.
- Students benefit from extensive use of the local community to provide learning opportunities that are realistic and enjoyable.
- The college has invested in very good resources to support learning, including facilities for sensory based learning, and a range of high-quality realistic work environments.

Full report

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Build on the high proportion of outstanding and good teaching by ensuring that all lessons are up to the standard of the very best.
- Simplify the effective but time-consuming quality assurance processes by implementing a more integrated management-information system.
- Further develop systems to gather feedback from parents to contribute to the self-assessment process.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learners make excellent progress in developing their communication skills so that they have a voice and are able to exercise choice. The more-able learners can acknowledge and comment more accurately on features in the world around them. They use their literacy skills to record their achievements as they progress successfully towards the Duke of Edinburgh's bronze award. Learners at all levels respond positively to the wide range of experiences available to them to develop their communication skills to their full potential. ▪ Nearly all learners are enrolled on an accredited learning course for part of their programme and achievement levels are high. In 2011/12 all learners on entry level 2 or 3 fully met their course requirements and a large majority of learners at entry level one were successful. Learners on work placements develop a good understanding of workplace expectations and the skills that are required. For example, in the college cafes these learners make excellent progress against their starting points in dealing with the demands of customers politely and efficiently. ▪ Learners make outstanding progress towards realising their planned learning and independence goals. Over the last two years, nearly all learners achieved over 90% of their targets. Targets are suitably challenging and cover all aspects of the learner's programme, including independence, behavioural and communication goals. Staff make detailed and accurate assessments of learners' progress against a wide range of targets on a daily basis. The more-able learners take some responsibility for their own learning through evaluating how well they have achieved their learning objectives. ▪ Learners make very good progress in their personal and social behaviour. They are increasingly able to engage calmly with a wide group of people in unfamiliar settings. For example, in a residential care home for the elderly, a learner on work placement displayed excellent development of confidence in socialising with the residents as well as practical skills in preparing afternoon tea. Many learners with autism are aware of situations that may make them uncomfortable. They are able to use their new found communication skills to avoid such stressful environments without causing distress to themselves or others. One learner was able to use his communication book to indicate the need for a break when on his work-experience placement. ▪ The college collates and analyses the performance of all learners at the end of each term as well as at the end of the year. Information gathered clearly shows that there are no significant variations in achievement between different groups of learners in relation to learners on courses at different levels or when considering disability, gender or ethnicity. ▪ The number of learners progressing into some form of continuing education has improved each year in the last five years and is good. Through its thorough transition arrangements the college ensures increasing numbers of learners move into a supported or voluntary work environment, where appropriate. The number of learners moving into supported living has also increased in recent years. 	

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding and contribute to increasingly positive achievements for all learners. The college has a very strong focus on learning and a determined approach to improving teaching and assessment. Teachers, therapists and support staff are highly motivated to support and develop learners' skills and understanding and they hold high expectations of what students can achieve.
- A wide range of multi-disciplinary professionals collaborate effectively with teachers and support staff to provide the best possible learning experience. For example, speech and language therapists work successfully alongside teachers in modelling strategies that help to develop learners' communication skills.
- Thorough initial, baseline and continuing assessment practices inform individual learning, behaviour and support planning. Based on the outcomes of rigorous assessment, staff use challenging individual targets exceptionally well in planning teaching and learning. Learners receive high levels of care appropriate to their individual need. Highly effective behaviour-management strategies enable students to participate fully in all activities and, when possible, to develop the skills to manage their own behaviour.
- Students are motivated to succeed through an extensive range of practical activities which take place in realistic contexts such as workshops, internal and external workplaces and well-resourced vocational areas. These include the college Juice Bar, animal care facility, music room, gym and Rainbow café.
- Teachers use their skills and expertise highly effectively to plan activities which are well-matched to the need of individuals and provide appropriate challenge for the more-able students. For example, in an art lesson the use of smart-boards enabled students at all levels to develop skills in drawing or sentence construction.
- The significant investment in low and high technology communication aids is having a positive impact in developing learners' abilities to succeed. In the Juice Bar, a learner with complex disabilities was successful at using the interactive cash register, with voice and picture recognition, to deal with customer purchases of food sold over break-time. In a lesson on preparing for employment, one learner used a computer to explore topical issues about recent government budget announcements and the teacher seized the opportunity to reinforce awareness of e-safety.
- Schemes of work are good and lesson planning is detailed and includes comprehensive guidance for support staff. However, some plans are unnecessarily complex and lengthy. A high proportion of teaching and learning is outstanding or good, with a small amount that is not as successful at engaging learners.
- The consistent application and promotion of communication strategies is excellent. For example, the use of visual time lines ensures college routines are well understood and aid concentration for those learners with more severe and complex disabilities. The traffic light system enables such students to regain focus and aids transition times between sessions. Symbol-supported text helps to expand developing literacy skills. Inspectors saw many excellent examples of teachers planning to develop learners' communication skills and, where appropriate, knowledge of English and numeracy.
- Teachers provide a high level of insightful reflection into the improvement of their professional practice as a result of well-developed arrangements to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The college has invested well to ensure the environment is suited to those students with autism specific disorders, and to train staff to maximise the use of information and communication technologies.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Each student has a support coordinator and key worker who provide effective advocacy advice and guidance. Together they rigorously monitor learning programmes and oversee students' transition through the college. The much improved and expanded work-experience placements, using a wide range of local employers, ensure learners have good opportunities to gain work-related skills. Effective use is made of the local

authority's advocacy service to support learners who are deemed to have the capacity to make independent choices.

- The college promotes equality and diversity very well through a culture of respect and sensitivity for all. Good attention is given to celebrating difference; such activities include fashion shows and cross-college events to celebrate important festivals across a range of religions and cultures. The student council is active in organising and monitoring this work. Lesson plans record how teachers promote the understanding of equality and diversity in lessons.
- Very good attention is given to raise students' awareness of health and safety, especially in the work environment. Guidance from risk assessments is implemented consistently.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leadership and management are outstanding because of the relentless and successful drive for continuous improvement since the last inspection. The college is currently undergoing a period of change in its senior leadership. Strong systems and a culture of high expectations have ensured a smooth transfer of roles. Inspectors found the day-to-day management of the college and the quality of provision for learners to be very good.
- Governors provide a clear strategic direction. They are very clear about external factors affecting the college and regularly review the provision offered to ensure it meets changing needs. Governors provide senior leaders with a good balance of support and challenge and have a clear understanding of the college's strengths and areas for further development. Governors carry out their statutory responsibilities well. They undertake appropriate training, but do not formally assess their effectiveness sufficiently regularly.
- Staff work very well together to provide a high quality experience for the learners. Middle management is strong and provides excellent leadership for course teams. Communication across the college is good and there is a high level of staff support for the clear priorities outlined by managers. Regular team meetings and daily briefings ensure staff are kept up to date with issues affecting the learning of individual students. Parents identified occasional times when this is less effective.
- Performance management is outstanding. Regular monitoring of teaching, learning and support ensures the college identifies staff who need further development. Where this is unsuccessful, robust capability procedures are implemented. Appraisals for staff and managers are based on clear targets set as a result of the outcomes of performance management throughout the year.
- Lesson observations carried out by college managers in 2011/12 focussed on specific areas for improvement and inspectors found actions taken to be successful, with a very high proportion of teaching and learning now being outstanding or good.
- Some aspects of the quality assurance system are over-complex. The college is investigating ways to integrate management information more effectively, and simplify processes within lesson planning.
- Training for staff takes a high priority. All staff receive regular updates on fundamental aspects such as behaviour management and safeguarding. In addition, training is targeted well to the specific needs of individual staff. The induction process for new staff is very thorough. In recent years, the college has focused on developing staff skills to meet the changing needs of students, for example, by intensifying training for working with young people with autism. One example of excellent staff training is the highly effective multi-disciplinary workshops around the needs of individual learners.
- The curriculum is outstanding. Learners are placed on courses at a level appropriate to their needs and personalised according to their changing circumstances. Learners benefit from extensive access to learning within the community and work placements. Partnerships with a range of organisations, including a further education college, employers and community services, are used very effectively to enhance the curriculum.

- Resources to support learning are very good. Investment has taken place in new facilities for learners who benefit from a sensory environment and in enterprise facilities and realistic work environments. The range of specialist support staff is excellent.
- The college's self-assessment processes are very effective at driving up the quality of provision. The views of learners are gathered regularly and used well to inform self-assessment. Systems are in place to gather feedback from parents, including the parents' forum and a parent governor, but the college recognises that this is an area for further development.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well. The college monitors carefully the achievement of students by different groups. Governors are active in this role, with one governor taking a lead on this and regular reporting to the board. Students are given opportunities through the curriculum, house meetings and tutorials to explore their understanding of equality and diversity.
- The college has a strong focus on safeguarding and appropriate systems are in place. A trained social worker leads on this work for the college, and staff training ensures staff are clear about roles, responsibilities and reporting systems. Appropriate links are in place with external agencies.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

David Lewis College			
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes
Overall effectiveness	1	1	1
Outcomes for learners	1	1	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	1	1	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management	1	1	1

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Independent living and leisure skills	1

Provider details

David Lewis College	
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 86
	Part-time: 0
Principal/CEO	Billy McInally
Date of previous inspection	May 2007
Website address	www.davidlewis.org.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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	3	75	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Macclesfield College 							

Additional socio-economic information

David Lewis is an independent specialist college catering for students with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. There are a number of students with epilepsy and autistic spectrum disorder and some students have additional sensory or physical disabilities, or present challenging behaviour. Most students are residential; around a third attend on a day only basis. The majority of students are White British; there are two students who speak English as an additional language. Students attend from across the country. The college is operated by the David Lewis Centre, a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Sue Harrison HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the curriculum manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report and monitoring visits. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements and information on their progress to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, a phone call with a parent governor 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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