

St Elizabeth's College

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates		4 – 6 June 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Systems to monitor learners' progress have not been sufficiently robust. Action is being taken to address this in the current year, but managers do not have a clear picture of learners' progress over time.
- Although they are improving, too many aspects of teaching, learning and assessment are not yet good enough.
- Work to develop learners' English skills is not always relevant to their needs and this limits their progress.
- Actions to address issues identified at the last inspection have taken too long to implement and the pace of improvement has been too slow.
- Staff are not sufficiently involved in the self-assessment process and are not always clear about priorities for improvement.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Learners show good improvement in their behaviour and ability to communicate and interact with others.
- Learners enjoy practical sessions and gain useful skills.
- Learners are helped to engage in learning by good therapist and specialist support.
- The college has effective partnerships to provide enterprise opportunities and work placements for learners.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that measures being taken to improve the tracking of learners' progress do not focus solely on short-term measures but are effective enough to give managers clear evidence of learners' progress over time.
- Focus improvement work in teaching, learning and assessment on the following key areas: targets for learners should be clear and meaningful; classroom-based sessions need to be more effective at engaging learners; the work of learning support assistants in classes should be monitored more closely to ensure it is effective at helping learners to develop independence and make progress.
- Build on the better examples that exist in literacy provision to share good practice. Ensure all literacy work is tailored to the ability and needs of individual learners and that it is delivered in relevant and meaningful ways that will help them in their future lives.
- Ensure that all staff are involved in self-assessment processes to identify the college's strengths and areas for improvement, and that staff are clear about priorities and timescales to bring about improvement more rapidly.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- The college is aware that it lacks a coherent system for recording and analysing learners' progress, and improvements are currently in development. Staff keep information in a variety of different ways but data on achievements and progress are not yet sufficiently collated and analysed. It is not at present possible for the college to judge trends over time in outcomes for learners.
- Learners enjoy learning through practical activities such as working in the town football club on a wide variety of jobs, including outside work on the grounds or sorting football kit inside. Learners on horticulture projects are able to sow seeds, transplant seedlings, grow them on and create hanging baskets to sell to the public. Others make well-designed, attractive objects for a local gallery. However, learners' concentration and enjoyment in classroom-based lessons is less evident and this limits their progress.
- Learners improve their independent living skills appropriately in small steps. Much of this work takes place in the residences, where progress against specific tasks is recorded but it is less clear how well learners are doing overall in different aspects of daily living skills.
- Learners' behaviour improves well. They become less anxious, more relaxed and more sociable. Their ability to concentrate increases and they adopt more mature ways of interacting with staff. The number of recorded incidents reduces as learners gradually develop their own behaviour management strategies with support from staff.
- Learners attending extended work placements and practical enterprise activities develop their work skills effectively. Their attendance is mostly good; they work hard, keep focused on their tasks and develop their social and communication skills. Learners working on enterprise projects that produce income for the college receive a small but important daily wage for work performed to a high standard. Short work experience placements do not develop learners' work skills adequately and the recording of progress by support staff is not always regular enough.
- Learners develop numeracy skills more effectively than literacy skills. Most make good progress in everyday numeracy skills, such as the use of money for shopping. They make less progress in

the development of English skills that are relevant to their abilities and to the demands of their future lives.

- The college enters learners for a limited range of units of accreditation and learners generally achieve these well. Progression to appropriate living arrangements on leaving college is good. Nearly all learners succeed in moving to supported independent living, with a programme of activities to help them to continue their skill development and social activities.
- The lack of a reliable system to track learners' progress in previous years makes it difficult to judge whether there are any significant differences in outcomes for different groups of learners. Evidence from the current year, including inspection observations, indicates no differences, for example for male and female learners.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because not enough teaching is consistently good, especially in classroom-based activities. Learners make better progress in practical activities and during work experience and enterprise sessions. Learning is more evident when they are given work to do which is successfully planned to develop skills important in their future lives. For example, they establish useful work routines, and effectively interact with other learners to develop meaningful relationships.
- Staff generally manage learners' behaviour well to enable them to participate in their lessons. In one session a teacher skilfully encouraged a learner to complete a task despite his reluctance to learn. In another session teachers and support staff very patiently and sensitively dealt with a learner's anger and were successful at preventing an escalation of his challenging behaviour.
- Learners' involvement in evaluating their own learning is good in the best sessions. They are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned and the progress they make in achieving their learning targets. In a current affairs session learners were able to recall recent news items they had researched using the internet and the computer skills they had learned to present their findings.
- In less effective lessons planning for learning does not take into account the different levels of learners' ability or the skills they have already developed. In too many cases learners are given the same activity to complete. Less able learners are given work that is too difficult for them to achieve. On occasions this results in them choosing not to participate in the sessions and in a deterioration of their behaviour. More able learners are not always given work to build on the skills they already have. On occasions lessons are not sufficiently interesting or relevant to sustain students' motivation to learn.
- Teachers do not always integrate qualifications well enough into classroom-based activities resulting in learners being asked to evidence work they find difficult to complete. In these lessons learners struggle to write and interpret information independently.
- In too many lessons, learners work on literacy tasks that do not help them to progress, for example trying to read material that is too difficult or copying lists of words. Examples of better practice exist where naturally occurring opportunities are used well in meaningful and relevant ways, such as labelling plants during a gardening social enterprise activity.
- Lessons are generally successful in helping learners to improve their numeracy skills. For example, in a sports session designed to encourage team work, learners counted the number of times they completed a circuit of physical exercises, effectively incorporating numeracy as well as good social and communication skills.
- The quality of general learning support provided to learners in lessons is inconsistent. Some good examples of effective support are evident especially when staff know the learners well and understand their learning needs. However, in too many lessons the support provided is too directive. Learners' progress is hampered by learning support staff who provide too many

prompts and occasionally resort to completing work for learners if the tasks they are given are too difficult.

- Specialist support is more effective. Initial assessment processes have improved and are successful at identifying learners' specific support needs. Therapists and specialist support services are comprehensive and provide useful recommendations to staff in the approach and strategies to use with individual learners, such as the use of speech and language therapy.
- The recording and review of learning targets requires improvement. In too many cases learning targets are worded in language too difficult for learners to understand. Long-term targets do not always reflect the skills learners need to learn for their future lives. Tutorials are effective in addressing personal issues raised by learners but do not give sufficient focus in evaluating the progress they make in achieving their learning goals.
- Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Links with other providers including special schools are developing to ensure prospective learners' needs are accurately identified and addressed before they enrol at the college. Transition arrangements have improved and are now effectively helping learners to progress to appropriate destinations when they leave college.
- Equality and diversity are effectively promoted. Staff are acutely aware of learners' complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities and encourage learners to respect one another and to form positive views of themselves and their capabilities. Learners successfully integrate into the wider community through the extensive work and leisure opportunities afforded to them.
- Staff pay good attention to health and safety through detailed risk assessments for individuals. This helps learners to participate fully in practical and work related activities.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The college has experienced a period of instability within the senior leadership team that has limited the amount of progress to address issues identified at the last inspection. Staff have undergone significant changes to roles and responsibilities within the current year and are still developing their understanding of revised priorities. However, there is good support for the drive to raise standards in teaching and learning and for the interim leadership arrangements that are currently in place.
- Governance has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now a key focus for governors. Better training for their role, and improved links with external organisations, are helping them to benchmark the work of the college against similar institutions. The quality of information governors receive is improving and they now provide a better level of challenge to senior leaders. However, the Board recognises this needs to improve further and plans are in place to appoint additional members with educational expertise. Governors carry out their statutory duties effectively.
- A stronger focus on the quality of teaching and learning is starting to bring about improvements to lessons, though the pace of improvement has been too slow. A new staffing structure to deliver teaching and learning was introduced in September and regular checks on the quality of lessons enable the college to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Coaching for staff is put in place where required and, where this is not effective, appropriate capability procedures are in place.
- The proportion of teaching and learning that is good or better has increased in the current year but overall it is still not good enough. Staff benefit from a range of training but this does not yet focus sufficiently on common areas for improvement identified in the monitoring of teaching and learning. Monitoring of the work of learning support assistants in class takes place but has not been effective in improving the quality of support where it is less than good.

- Senior leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the areas for improvement as well as the strengths of the college, but staff have not been sufficiently involved in self-assessment processes. The views of learners have a high priority. The college gathers learners' views well through a variety of methods and follow-up action is well documented. The views of parents and carers are also canvassed but the college recognises this is less successful and plans are in place to increase the level of contact. Parental feedback during the inspection was generally positive about their experience of the college, but a small minority were less satisfied with aspects of the provision.
- The curriculum meets the needs of learners well in terms of opportunities provided by enterprise workshops and work placements. The college has good links with a range of partners to strengthen this work. For example, learners benefit from links with the local football club and work placements are also offered by organisations such as major supermarket chains. However, within the curriculum classroom-based activities are not all matched well to learners' needs. This includes some of the work taking place to develop literacy skills. The college is carrying out a review of the curriculum, including the range of accreditation, to ensure all aspects are relevant to learners.
- Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily. A culture of respect for others pervades the college and opportunities to celebrate a wide range of cultural traditions also help to develop learners' understanding. Recruitment patterns are analysed to identify learner trends and the college recognises the need to carry out further work to identify the reasons why female learners currently comprise a small minority of the total cohort. Systems to monitor learners' progress have not been robust enough and work is now taking place to strengthen this.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for the safeguarding of learners. Appropriate systems are in place in terms of recruitment practices and training for staff. Recording of incidents is detailed and clear links exist with external agencies in terms of referrals. Risk assessments are thorough and updated regularly.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

St Elizabeth's College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	3					3			
Outcomes for learners	3					3			
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3					3			
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3					3			

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Independent living and leisure skills	3

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent specialist college							
Age range of learners	19+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	32							
Principal/CEO	Sharon Wallin (Interim Leadership Support)							
Date of previous inspection	May 2012							
Website address	www.stelizabeths.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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	0	32	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		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	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"> ▪ N/A. 							

Contextual information

The college was opened in 2004 and is part of St. Elizabeth's Centre, founded by the Daughters of the Cross of Liege. The centre is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee and comprises a residential adult centre, a residential school and the college. The college provides further education for young adults with learning difficulties and complex needs. The majority of learners have a 52 week tenancy with a Housing Association and attend a 38 week formal college programme as day learners. The college is located near Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire. Learners are recruited mainly from the south and east of England with approximately one third of learners from Essex, the largest placing authority.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Sue Harrison HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the acting principal 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 relevant 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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