

St Elizabeth's College

Independent specialist college



Inspection dates

24–26 November 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Require improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Too little teaching, learning and assessment are good, particularly in provision for learners with the most complex needs.
- The overall progress that learners make in lessons is not clear, because learners have too many targets, and teachers prioritise these differently.
- The arrangements to track, monitor and review the overall progress that learners make from their starting points have improved, but are not comprehensive enough.
- The current timetable focuses too little on enabling learners to meet their individual aspirations and long-term goals.
- Managers do not carry out formal observations of learning support assistants (LSAs), or of the activities led by individuals who are not teachers.

The provider has the following strengths

- Governors and managers ensure that the safeguarding of learners extends to all aspects of the college, so that learners live and study in a safe, calm environment.
- The multidisciplinary team manages the complex medical needs of learners well, so that they can participate in college activities.
- Learning support staff use very effective behaviour management strategies to enable learners to continue in lessons.
- Many learners show good improvement in developing the confidence to communicate more effectively with their peers and members of staff, and to raise issues of concern.
- Learners have good opportunities to develop their employability skills through a range of work-related activities.
- Learners learn to respect their peers and members of staff, and this creates a harmonious atmosphere.

Full report

Information about the provider

- St Elizabeth's College 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, which was established as a national centre for people with disabling epilepsy. The governors of the college report to the centre's trustees. The college is located on a rural site near Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire, and provides education programmes for young adults with a range of medical and complex learning needs. The majority of the 33 enrolled learners are in residence at the college and have tenancies with a housing association, and a few learners attend on a daily basis.
- Learners are recruited from the south and east of England, the greatest proportion from Essex.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by making sure that teachers plan stimulating activities that engage learners and provide challenge for everyone in the group.
- Make sure that all teachers, particularly those teaching learners with the most complex learning needs, have the necessary specialist knowledge and understanding for working with this cohort.
- Extend the quality assurance arrangements to include the LSAs and all activities led by non-teaching staff, so that everyone who teaches the learners is observed, and provided with guidance and support if required.
- Continue to improve the arrangements to track the progress that learners make from their starting points, by capturing learning in relation to learners' overall goals and aspirations. Make use of the data, so that managers can evaluate the performance of the college year on year.
- Simplify the arrangements for the setting and monitoring of targets, making sure that these relate more specifically to learners' individual aspirations and goals, rather than to the accreditation requirements.
- Continue to develop the curriculum so that it is more individualised, reflects the aspirations and goals identified by learners in their application to the college, and enables day students to prepare more effectively for any transition to supported living settings. Consider increasing the opportunities for engaging with the wider community.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- The college has been through a period of significant change, and the leadership team is new. Governors and managers are still in the process of appointing additional senior staff and new teachers. Managers, well supported by governors, have introduced changes, including a complete overview of the curriculum, but recognise that teaching, learning and assessment have not improved enough since the previous inspection.
- During 18 months of turnover of teachers, and periods of extended absence, managers have been unsuccessful in their repeated attempts to recruit teaching staff with specialist knowledge and experience, particularly in the context of the high number of learners with high and complex needs. At the time of inspection, a quarter of teaching staff were temporary.
- Managers identified in the quality improvement plan what they needed to do to improve the provision, in particular the quality of teaching and learning, which they recognised continued to require improvement. Much is new. In grading the provision overall, managers had not taken sufficient account of the impact of changes, such as the new curriculum, and the arrangements to measure progress.
- Managers have increased the frequency of teaching observations and learning walks. The completed records show that they know what needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching and learning, although the suggestions for improvement are not always specific enough. They identified accurately the strengths and weaknesses in the lessons observed jointly with inspectors.
- Managers do not formally observe the support staff in lessons, nor do they observe the teaching and learning in other activities outside the college, such as the social enterprises that learners regularly attend as part of their educational programme. Consequently, they do not have an accurate picture of the quality of these aspects of the provision.
- Managers have improved the quality assurance arrangements by increasing the frequency of staff supervision, and all teaching and support staff attended an intensive six-day training event before the start of the academic year to prepare them for the new arrangements. However, this training has not yet impacted sufficiently on the quality of educational provision.
- Managers have reviewed the curriculum and implemented a new programme based on accredited qualifications in work preparation and employability skills, including mathematics and English. This is in the early stages of implementation. Although improvements are planned, the current timetable is not sufficiently personalised, and does not focus enough on meeting learners' individual aspirations and goals.
- Residential students have ample opportunities in the evenings and at weekends to prepare for supported living. However, opportunities for day students to develop skills of independence, and engage with the wider community in order to prepare for the transition to supported living, are limited.
- The programme of staff development in relation to specialist medical support, and topics such as behaviour management, is extensive and very effective. It contributes to the maintenance of an atmosphere in much of the college that is calm and conducive to learning.
- The core value of respecting others is very well promoted in the college. Managers implement the centre's equality and diversity policy effectively, making sure, through the tutorial programme, that learners have the opportunity to discuss topics such as bullying and e-safety.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - The governors have supported the college well during the period of turbulence, and have strongly supported the restructuring of the curriculum. They have held the managers to account robustly, requiring detailed updates of progress every two months. They appreciate that the college is on a journey, in which the substantial changes to the curriculum, and the monitoring of the progress of learners, are still in the early stages of implementation.
 - They are in the process of recruiting more external governors, in order to increase the breadth of experience of the membership.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Arrangements to safeguard the learners are very effective. All staff and governors are updated annually, and a trustee of the charity has specific responsibility for safeguarding. She visits the college very frequently, and receives information immediately about any serious safeguarding incidents. Staff training is mandatory and extensive, including the Mental Capacity Act, 2005, and risk assessments are updated flexibly as required. Staff and learners have the confidence to report incidents and know that staff will respond swiftly.

- Managers have responded appropriately to the 'Prevent' agenda to protect learners from harm. They have cascaded training throughout the college and teachers are encouraged through the tutorial programme to adapt it appropriately to the learner cohort. Governors are about to receive specific training.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Too little teaching, learning and assessment are good. Despite a proportion of good practice, too few teachers are skilful enough in preparing lessons that match the needs of each learner and fully engage the whole group. The LSAs are not always adequately deployed. As a result, learners do not always progress well enough in lessons.
- The assessment of learners' starting points is comprehensive and informative. Staff work well with parents and with other professionals to identify learners' needs when they first enter the college. However, teachers do not always use this information effectively when setting targets with learners and monitoring their progress.
- The arrangements for the setting of goals and targets are over-complicated. Learners' targets in lessons do not always link explicitly to individual learning plans. They are based on the skills to be developed in that lesson, sometimes the requirements for units of accreditation, and not on learners' overall personal goals and aspirations. As a result, the overview record of each learner's progress from his or her starting point only includes a narrow range of achievements.
- The monitoring and recording of progress in lessons is too variable, and not all teachers routinely engage learners in recording what they have learnt. Learners are not always able to identify what they have learnt without significant prompting, and teachers do not always check learners' understanding, or consolidate learning, before moving on to the next learning activity.
- In a minority of sessions, teachers use strategies that engage learners well in activities that provide ample opportunities for developing a range of skills. In one lesson, the teacher used video footage to record learners' role plays. She then played back the video and learners analysed their performance. The teacher ensured that, in analysing the performances, all learners demonstrated respect for the perspectives of others.
- However, not enough teachers make use of such strategies to ensure that all learners are fully engaged, so that they can learn effectively. This is because they have not taken sufficient account of the learning needs of every student. The activities planned are sometimes too ambitious, with insufficient prior checking of understanding, and this means that the learners cannot complete the task without substantial assistance from an LSA. As a result, the learners with the most complex communication needs learn little in lessons.
- Learners enjoy attending the jewellery-making workshop based in the town centre, led by a non-teaching member of staff. Learners work well with LSAs and their peers, producing jewellery items for sale in the shop. However, it is not clear how any skills learners learn in that setting contribute to their individual learning plan and overall development goals.
- Where LSAs are skilful in implementing planned strategies to enable learners to participate in lessons, learners make good or better progress. However, teachers do not always deploy learning support assistants well enough in lessons. A few LSAs do not support students to concentrate on learning, and as a result, those learners do not make good progress.
- A few teachers use information and learning technology (ILT) in classroom-based lessons well to make learning structured and interactive. In one lesson, the teacher used the interactive whiteboard to enable learners to write and share their answers to questions with the group, and to encourage learners to correct their peers' spelling. At a meeting with the students' council, one student requested more use of interactive whiteboards because he appreciated the opportunity they provided to engage.
- On occasions, teachers are adept at integrating English into other lessons through carefully planned learning activities. These include discussing and collecting information on other learners' eating preferences and using it to produce data tables, or using a wide range of topics, chosen by learners, to inform discussions, group work and role play.
- At the football club, learners consolidate their numeracy skills by using numbers to sequence the players' kit and identifying the correct seat numbers where repairs are needed.
- Teachers make appropriate reference to the celebration and promotion of diversity during weekly tutorials. This includes topics such as personal and online safety, recognising British values, and identifying and respecting the religious practices of others. All learners engaged in a sustainable development project, where they researched each of the global goals and produced posters using

learning technology. One learner wrote to the Prime Minister to make a request for him to attend a meeting of all national leaders regarding the importance of nutrition. However, teachers do not routinely promote diversity in lessons.

- Most resources to support learners' development of work skills are of good quality, for example in the jewellery workshop and the college sports hall. However, the communication aids to support the cohort of learners with the most complex communication needs are insufficient. No teachers have specialist qualifications. The activities planned, and the language used in lessons for the learners with complex needs, are too difficult for the learners.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

- Learners benefit from good, specialist medical support. Teachers and LSAs are very skilful at managing medical incidents, such as seizures, and implement the strategies devised by the multidisciplinary team, so that learners can live and work in a calm atmosphere, and participate in activities wherever possible.
- Learners whose behaviour in class in previous settings has excluded them from participating in lessons are well supported by LSAs and teachers, and are able to remain in lessons for longer periods.
- Most teachers encourage learners to respect each other and the staff. Many LSAs model respectful behaviour as they work with the learners. As a result learners are polite and helpful both in lessons and around the college.
- Learners are encouraged to voice their views and raise issues of concern about any aspect of their experience in the college. The students' council encourages learners to raise issues of concern about all aspects of their lives at the college, which they do. They also learn to consider others through fund-raising activities to support charitable causes.
- Learners feel well protected from harm, and find that staff respond swiftly to incidents of bullying or aggression. One learner described how he had been bullied in school by others who called him horrid names, but that this had not happened at the college.
- Staff ensure the safety of learners in the classroom and in learning activities outside the college. For example, in the jewellery workshop, learners carefully work using sharp tools and materials, and LSAs manage them well to ensure that they are safe during the activity.
- Residential students develop their budgeting and money skills well when planning shopping lists and buying items to make healthy meals. Staff carefully oversee the items purchased by students and promote healthy eating plans. However, day students do not have sufficient opportunities to practise daily living skills and engage in the wider community.
- The majority of learners participate in work-related activities such as working on reception and in the centre's shop, or in the horticultural centre, a local football club and a jewellery project, which provide opportunities to develop customer service and work skills as well as functional English and mathematical skills.
- Transition planning to prepare learners for their destinations on leaving the college starts early. Staff identify learners' aspirations and potential outcomes well when they enter the college. However, learners do not always have a clear plan of where they want to go on leaving and the managers recognise in their quality improvement plan that they need to provide further guidance.
- The rates of retention and overall attendance at the college are high.

Outcomes for learners require improvement

- The arrangements to review the tracking, monitoring and reviewing of the learners' progress from their starting points have improved since the last inspection, but are not yet sufficiently comprehensive.
- The current arrangements for monitoring learners' progress over time identify well the specific generic skills linked to accreditation. This progress is well presented by the use of a very effective visual aid that shows graphically the distance travelled by learners in these aspects. However, the arrangements do not capture the individual progress that learners have made in developing the skills required to fulfil their aspirations or prepare for their destinations on leaving the college.
- Learners all achieved entry-level qualifications in 2014/15, following the introduction of accredited provision – the first time that this happened.
- Many learners improve their employability skills, including consolidation of functional English and

mathematics, when they participate in practical work-related activities, such as the centre shop and a local football club.

- Residential students develop skills of independence well in the evenings and at weekends. These are helpful when they progress to independent living. However, the small number of day students do not have sufficient opportunity to develop these skills.
- There are no discernible differences in the achievements of learners from different groups, and learners demonstrate considerable respect for each other and the staff.
- Most learners move into supported living when leaving the college. The number of learners progressing into some form of supported or open employment, or to further learning, is low.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	37
Principal/CEO	Sharon Wallin
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	
	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+
		33						
Funding received from At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Joyce Deere, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Denise Olander	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kathryn Brennan	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the Principal as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, and questionnaires, to gather the views of learners and parents; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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