



Better
education
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Tyne and Wear Autistic Society Adult Services



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Audience
Post-sixteen

Published
January 2006

Provider reference
50002

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Tyne and Wear Autistic Society Adult Services
Type of college:	Independent, residential, specialist
Head of Service:	Allan Tutty
Address of college:	14, Thornhill Park, Sunderland, SR2 7LA
Telephone number:	0191 510 2038
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Chair of governors:	Ian Newman
Unique reference number:	50002
Name of lead inspector:	Margaret Hobson
Dates of inspection:	8 – 10 November 2005

Background of the organisation

1. The Tyne and Wear Autistic Society Adult Services, previously known as Thornbeck College, is an independent, specialist college for adults with autism and Aspergers Syndrome. It was opened in 1994 by the Tyne and Wear Autistic Society in response to requests from parents to provide post-19 provision for learners with autism. The college changed its name from Thornbeck College to Tyne and Wear Autistic Society Adult Services in 2002. It now admits learners of 19 years of age funded by social services for life placements and from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for educational placements from the age of 19. There are currently 11 LSC-funded learners, of which one is female. There are no learners from a minority ethnic group.
2. The society is registered with the National Autistic Society (NAS). The college now provides 26 residential places for 52 weeks a year, which is an increase of seven places since the previous inspection. All current residential and day placements are funded by social services, health services and LSC. Thirteen additional placements are also available for day learners, of which nine are LSC-funded. Two LSC-funded learners have residential placements. The majority of learners have complex social and communication difficulties, and some have challenging behaviours.
3. There is a range of residential accommodation which has been further developed since the previous inspection. Thornbeck is now a day college. All six residential accommodations are in the community and include: Thorndale, The Court, Inverthorne, Moorpine, Dunelm and Rosehill. At the previous inspection, the college had just opened one workshop. There are now four workshops, two double, one used for a learner common room and a small one used for storage. These workshops are used to make products that are sold in the community including garden furniture, jewellery and cards.
4. Tyne and Wear Autistic Society have reviewed and revised their mission statement since the previous inspection. Tyne and Wear Autistic Society Adult Services' mission statement promotes the values and aims of the society through 'striving to be a centre of excellence in education, social and vocational training and care for people with autism and Asperger's Syndrome'. They aim to achieve this by providing individual tailor-made programmes that give learners and service-users the opportunity to experience a range of social, vocational and educational activities.

Scope of the inspection

5. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
 - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
 - achievements and standards
 - quality of provision
 - leadership and management
 - specialist provision.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: grade 3
Achievements and standards	Satisfactory: grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: grade 3

Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

6. This is a satisfactory college. Learners' achievements are satisfactory with good standards of work achieved in the community-based workshops. Learners work with enthusiasm and confidence, and enjoy their time at college. They make satisfactory progress in independent living skills while residential learners make good progress in this area. The development of communication skills is satisfactory overall. Where appropriate, learners have achieved well on local general FE college programmes. There are no differences between the achievements of different groups of learners.
7. Teaching across the college is satisfactory overall and some is good. The more successful lessons involve effective planning and preparation, relevant activities and integrated targets in literacy, numeracy and communication. In less successful lessons, there were missed opportunities for the development of communication skills. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is now satisfactory. Assessment is satisfactory overall but there are missed opportunities to record progress in relation to autism-specific development.
8. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory overall but the college is not fully compliant with recent equalities legislation. Learners have equal access to the range of curriculum activities. Satisfactory procedures are established to promote the safety, well being and progress of individual learners. However, individual risk assessments are insufficiently developed.
9. Guidance and support for learners are good. Learners receive good levels of support during lessons, with high levels of support for care, behaviour and intervention plans in the residences. Specialist support services are provided as required but there is insufficient specialist input at initial assessment. Group tutorials are effective and although learners do not have regular planned one-to-one tutorials, these are available as needed. Learners are insufficiently prepared for transition.
10. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed chief executive officer is working closely with the trustees to further develop strategic management. Operational management and communications, as in the previous inspection, remains good. Quality assurance arrangements and self-assessment are satisfactory. Although arrangements for improving key teaching and learning processes are underdeveloped. Lesson observations satisfactorily identify strengths and areas for improvement. Governance is satisfactory. Financial planning is effective and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory : grade 3

11. The college demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve. Inspectors found the self assessment arrangements to be satisfactory with contributions from across the service. In the self assessment report for 2005/06 many of the organisational strengths and areas for improvement are identified, although in literacy, numeracy and communications provision strengths were overestimated. Strategic priorities have been identified to improve provision within the three year development plan and a quality improvement plan devised with target dates for achievement.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

12. The college has made satisfactory progress. Changes to the senior management structure including the appointment of a financial manager and a chief executive officer, provides more defined responsibilities in terms of the strategic and operational management functions. Some improvements have been made to overall educational provision. The acquisition of a new house has improved the living environment for residential learners and freed space for the college to improve the availability of teaching rooms. However accommodation still remains inaccessible to learners with restricted mobility.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- high quality residential accommodation in community houses
- good community-based workshop facilities
- the effective use of local community facilities to promote learning
- good development of independent living skills in the community houses
- successful group tutorial system
- good staff training and development
- effective behaviour management.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the further development of autism-specific targets
- the quality of the health and safety processes
- the insufficient response to equality and diversity legislation
- the skill levels of learning support assistants
- the underdeveloped transition planning
- the inadequate careers advice and guidance.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

13. Learners' achievements are satisfactory and the quality of work in the workshops is good. Two learners are working with increased independence during work experience. Learners enjoy their time at the college and work with enthusiasm and confidence. Most learners make satisfactory progress in independent living skills while residential learners make good progress in this area. The development of communication skills is satisfactory overall with effective development in some lessons and in residences. In other instances, there are missed opportunities for the development of communication skills. Learners make good progress in emotional and behaviour development. There is a high level of participation in the wide and varied extended and leisure curriculum.
14. There are no differences between the achievements of different groups of learners. Most learners achieve their learning goals satisfactorily. Baseline assessment is detailed with a range of literacy, numeracy and communication targets set across all curriculum areas. These are closely monitored for achievement through the tutorial process. There are insufficient autism-specific targets set. Some goals are insufficiently challenging and some continue to remain on individual learning plans after they are achieved. Where appropriate, learners have achieved well on local general FE college programmes. For example, five learners have achieved a range of units at Entry level in the OCR First Steps in Using a Computer qualification.
15. Learners increase their skills through the community-based workshops and the extended curriculum of community-based leisure activities. Learners now receive basic health and safety training which helps them to develop an awareness of safety in the workshops. They have a good involvement in the local community. Retention rates are good. There is good punctuality and attendance which is monitored by managers.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

16. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and some is good. In the self-assessment report, the college accurately estimated the quality of its teaching and learning. Lessons remain predominantly practical and provide good opportunities for learners to achieve success at different levels. This includes good use of community facilities to promote learning such as shopping for materials to use in the workshops or meal preparation. In the workshops, learners complete tasks at their level of ability and contribute to a final marketable product including greetings cards, garden planters and jewellery.

17. Most lessons are adequately planned, with objectives based on individual learning plans. In the more successful lessons, planning and preparation are effective with a range of relevant activities and integrated targets in literacy, numeracy and communication. In the less successful lessons, the curriculum is based on literacy, numeracy and communication targets which are not appropriately used or reinforced in practical contexts to develop learning.
18. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is now satisfactory. The recently revised curriculum focuses on developing learners' literacy, numeracy and communication skills with a reduced emphasis on targets in relation to learners' autistic spectrum disorders. Opportunities are missed to recognise and record progress in relation to autism-related issues.
19. The high quality residential houses are used successfully to develop learners' independence. The extended community-based workshops provide a very good resource for learning. They have been adapted to meet the specific needs of autistic learners, with appropriate use of pictorial sequenced work schedules, templates for promoting independence in work and colour coding for work areas. As at the previous inspection, none of the teaching or residential accommodation has been adapted for use by individuals with restricted mobility. Information technology facilities remain good. All of the teaching staff have appropriate qualifications and care staff either have a NVO level 3 in care or are working towards the qualification.
20. Assessment is satisfactory overall. Initial assessment satisfactorily identifies learners' needs and is used to develop individual learning plans. Diagnostic assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy needs is detailed. Individual learning plans are satisfactory but, as identified in the self-assessment report, some target setting is ineffective. Literacy and numeracy targets are clearly stated within lesson plans across all curriculum activities. Whilst numeracy and communication targets relate sufficiently to the development of independence and social skills, literacy targets are less effective and meaningful. The recording of learners' progress is satisfactory but there are missed opportunities to record progress in relation to autism-specific development. There is good recording of learners' progress in relation to self-development, communication, and life skills within residential settings. Annual reviews of progress are satisfactory but do not identify priority areas for target setting for the forthcoming year. There is good communication with parents and carers through the annual review process.
21. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory overall but the college is not fully compliant with recent equalities legislation. The college responds well to meeting the needs and interests of learners with autism and Aspergers syndrome. Learners participate fully in a wide range of programmes and community based activities, including access to local sector colleges and recreational facilities. Learners have a say in the choice of activities through student meetings in both college and residential settings. As

at the previous inspection, insufficient use is made of external work placements. Health and safety procedures for both in-house and external work placements are insufficiently developed. However, learners now receive basic health and safety training and some receive basic food hygiene training.

22. Support and guidance for learners is good with satisfactory access to a range of specialist support. Learners receive good levels of support during lessons. Within residences learners are given high levels of support for care, behaviour and intervention plans, as well as for the development of independent living skills including money management. During curriculum activities, learners receive one-to-one support as appropriate. However within observed lessons, support assistants did not always allow learners time to problem solve or learn through making mistakes and directed learners in the completion of tasks. Group tutorials are effective in providing opportunities for learners to express opinions, make choices and review targets. This includes discussions on meal choices and satisfactory awareness of healthy eating. Learners do not have regular planned one-to-one tutorials but these are available as needed. Transition planning is underdeveloped with inadequate careers advice and guidance for future progression.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory : grade 3

23. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders and managers set a clear vision based on a thorough understanding of learner needs. The senior management team has recently been strengthened by the appointment of a chief executive officer who is working closely with the trustees to further develop strategic management, including the future development and direction of the college. Operational management and communication, as in the previous inspection report, remain good. The management of the recently modified risk assessments is unsatisfactory. The self assessment process is satisfactory and largely accurate but does not identify all areas for improvement that were found by inspectors.
24. Staff feel well supported and are effectively managed. As identified in their self-assessment report, staff training and development remains good. Staff training on autism is of a high quality. Systems to supervise and appraise staff are good. Staff are funded for a wide range of short courses as well as further training leading to professional qualifications. They have adequate qualifications and skills to perform their role. The skills of learning support assistants to provide effective support to learners is in need of further development.
25. There is an appropriate range of policies and procedures which are reviewed annually. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory overall. Lesson observations conducted by managers and senior tutors appropriately identify strengths and areas for improvement. Actions to improve tutor performance are monitored and discussed during staff supervisions. The college's grades

awarded for teaching and learning are broadly in line with inspectors' grades given during inspection. Quality assurance arrangements for key teaching and learning processes are underdeveloped.

26. Governance is satisfactory and consists of a board of governors which acts as an advisory group to management, and a board of trustees. The trustee board are aware of their statutory obligation to ensure the college's adherence to SENDA and RR(A) Act. The college is only partially compliant with equalities legislation which is identified in their self-assessment report. There is still inadequate access to college accommodation for learners with restricted mobility. However, a satisfactory access audit has been carried out and plans are in place for the college to move to more accessible accommodation although the location has yet to be finalised. Staff training has taken place on equality and diversity and the need to provide further training is identified in the self-assessment report. All staff actively promote equality and diversity issues within curriculum activities and during their daily contact with learners. However, there is insufficient monitoring of equality and diversity. Safeguarding policies are adequate and staff training has taken place to ensure procedures are followed.
27. Financial resources are effectively deployed. Managers set budgets to support educational priorities. The requirements set out within LSC individual learner schedules are being met. The college provides satisfactory value for money.