



Henshaws College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

Published
May 2006

Provider reference
121777

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Henshaws College
Type of college:	Independent Specialist Residential
Principal:	Caroline Smale
Address of college:	Bogs Lane Starbeck Harrogate North Yorkshire HG1 4ED
Telephone number:	01423 886451
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Chair of Trustees:	Tim Fawcett
Unique reference number:	121777
Name of reporting inspector:	Diane Stacey
Dates of inspection:	21-24 March 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Henshaws College is a national specialist, residential further education college for learners who are blind or partially sighted with additional difficulties. It is located on a 12 acre rural site on the outskirts of Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The college forms part of Henshaws Society for Blind People (HSBP), a registered charity, which is based in Manchester. The college principal is a director of the parent organisation and reports to the chief executive of the society. The society is managed by a board of 11 trustees.
2. All learners have learning difficulties and disabilities in addition to their primary disability of being visually impaired. These include moderate and severe learning difficulties, physical disabilities, communication disorders and behaviours that challenge. Learners are recruited nationally; the large majority from the north of the United Kingdom. The college is now able to accept a greater number of wheelchair users due to the rebuild of two new residential units of 19 beds and the improved teaching accommodation. Further improvements to the accommodation are planned. Residential accommodation is available in learners' houses on the main site. At the time of the inspection there were 63 residential learners (two who are funded by Scottish local authorities) and one day learner. All learners are aged between 16 and 25. Three per cent of learners were from black or minority ethnic backgrounds and 60 per cent were male.
3. The curriculum framework offers learners a range of pre-vocational programmes, residential and work related skills, basic skills, leisure activities and a personal support programme. Personal development is further offered through the extended curriculum.
4. The college's mission is 'to empower learners with skills and confidence to maximise their independence, minimize the effects of their sight loss and to achieve success throughout their adult lives'.

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 in: pre-vocational skills and independent living skills and mobility.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: grade 2
Achievements and standards	Good: grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: grade 2

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.

Curriculum areas

Pre-vocational skills	Good: grade 2
Independent living skills and mobility	Outstanding: grade 1

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

6. Learners' achievements are good overall and outstanding in independent living skills and mobility. The quality and standard of work is generally high. The majority of learners make good progress in targets set through the 10 Henshaws' achievement levels (HALs) for curriculum areas. They also make excellent progress in achieving star goals targets for developing personal, social and communication skills. Current rates of retention and attendance are good although there was a decrease in the rate of retention for 2004/05. Destination data is collated efficiently and shows satisfactory outcomes. Punctuality is good and is now being monitored effectively.
7. The majority of teaching is good or better, with some outstanding teaching in independent living skills and mobility. Lesson planning is good overall and activities are clearly differentiated to meet each learner's individual needs. Targets are clearly set using the HALs and star goals and individual learning plans are clearly linked to the comprehensive pre-entry and baseline assessments. Literacy and numeracy is starting to be embedded across learners' programmes but some opportunities are missed.
8. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. The promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity underpins all college activities and the college is fully compliant with relevant equality and diversity legislation. The campus and the new residential accommodation is of a high standard and fully accessible for all learners. Arrangements for providing learners with specially adapted equipment are very good. There are comprehensive procedures in place to promote the safety, well being and protection of individual learners.
9. Support for learners is good. Multi-disciplinary assessments identify support needs of learners very well. The wide range of therapists, employed by the college, work well together to produce high quality therapy programmes which link directly to learners' educational and personal development targets. The well thought out behaviour plans and strategies are used very effectively. The tutorial process is good and provides a framework to ensure that all learners are fully involved in assessing their own development. Careers advice and guidance is satisfactory but transition planning is underdeveloped.
10. Leadership and management are good. The college and staff have a clear vision which is centred on a thorough understanding of the needs of its learners. Communications systems are good and well established. Quality assurance processes are comprehensive and applied to all areas of the college's activities very effectively. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Improvements in a few areas have been slow to impact on the learners' experience. There is good governance by the trustees who are well informed and rigorously monitor the college's performance.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

11. There is good capacity to improve. The college management team has been strengthened by the appointment of a new principal in September 2005 who is already actively engaged in building on improvements to provision made since the last inspection. The self-assessment process is well established and satisfactorily identifies key areas for improvement. Quality assurance is comprehensive and includes regular lesson observations which have been successful in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Actions have been taken to improve issues raised at the annual assessment visit, and these are in the process of being implemented. Well established communication systems enable staff to work very effectively as teams focused on the needs of learners. Management and staff are fully committed to the continuous improvement of provision and morale is high.

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

12. The college has made good progress in addressing the key issues from the last inspection. Teaching in pre-vocational programmes has improved and is now good. The college has developed the curriculum and learners have opportunities that are appropriate to their individual needs and interests. Initial assessment has developed significantly and now effectively informs individual learning plans. The monitoring of learners' achievements over time is good but the day to day tracking of learners' progress needs further development. Effective communications across the college ensures that good practice is shared between staff. Equal opportunities is now promoted well and embedded throughout the curriculum. Quality assurance arrangements now successfully identify most areas for improvement but whole college performance indicators are still being developed.

KEY STRENGTHS OF THE COLLEGE

Strengths

- good achievements
- good teaching and learning
- comprehensive pre-entry and baseline assessments
- excellent extended curriculum
- good arrangements for work experience
- good support for learners
- comprehensive quality assurance arrangements

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The college should address:

- literacy and numeracy support
- the range of vocational opportunities
- transition planning

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

13. Learners' achievements are good overall and outstanding in independent living skills and mobility skills. There are however, some missed opportunities for improving literacy and numeracy skills. There is good recognition of all achievement through the Henshaws achievement levels (HALs) which have clear links to each curriculum area. Learners demonstrate significant improvement in social, communication and independence skills with targets clearly identified to the college's star goal targets. The skills gained are transferred into all areas of learners' programmes and lives. Learners enjoy their time at college and work with both enthusiasm and confidence. Learners have their achievements recognised through a national accredited award for their pre-vocational programme as well through a wide range of non-accredited certificates. All learners successfully achieved their accredited award for 2004/05. The college acknowledges that some learners are insufficiently challenged and is developing links with external organisations to expand the types and levels of vocational opportunities.
14. Learners gain very good levels of achievements and skills through the wide and varied extended curriculum. They regularly take part in the Special Olympics and in 2004-05 learners achieved 15 medals, including five gold, in swimming and 12 medals in athletics events; three of these were gold. The majority of learners participate in the Millennium Volunteer Scheme and members of the choir took part in busking activities in the local town. Learners increase their skills through a well organised work experience programme. All learners participate in work experience activities. Initially these are within well co-ordinated campus placements, with many then progressing to work placements with local employers. Destinations outcomes are satisfactory with the majority of learners progressing onto further education or training, or involved in voluntary work or day centre activities.
15. Retention rates up until 2003-2004 were good and were what was expected of similar provision. There was a fall in retention of learners for 2004-2005 to 88 per cent due to a variety of personal, ill health and opportunities to take up sheltered housing and vocational placements. Current retention rates are good. Issues around attendance and punctuality are addressed through the star goal target setting for learners. There is good punctuality and attendance.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

16. The quality of provision is good overall. Teaching and learning are good with no unsatisfactory teaching and with a high proportion being good or better observed during inspection. There was some outstanding teaching observed in both independent living skills and mobility sessions. In the best sessions learners' activities are differentiated and individual goals are set and monitored. All learners' activities are clearly linked to HAL and star goal targets. Good use is made of the personal and social education programme to

- introduce and reinforce learners' awareness of healthy eating and sexuality issues, for example. Opportunities to promote equality and diversity within teaching sessions are well planned and integrated within activities very effectively. Whilst inspectors agreed with the college that there is a greater awareness of how literacy and numeracy can be promoted through the curriculum, they also agreed that it is not yet fully developed.
17. Pre-entry and baseline assessments are comprehensive and inform individual learning plans using HALs and star goal targets across all areas of learners' programmes. Annual reviews are thorough and are supported with a comprehensive overview of the learner's progress. Whilst the management information system enables staff to gain an overview of learners' progress over time, the day to day tracking of targets is not yet fully developed.
 18. There is a good focus on health and safety during learners' daily activities. Risk assessments for work placements are in place but there is some inconsistency in the use of a common standardised risk assessment form and in ensuring that all are appropriately dated and signed.
 19. The college provides an excellent range of extended curriculum activities that includes a wide variety of sporting activities, Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, links with the community, a college choir and information technology for fun. During 2004/05, 63 learners participated in the Millennium Volunteer Scheme. There are particularly good arrangements for work experience from the well planned initial application process to the final evaluation of learners' experiences.
 20. There is a satisfactory range of externally and internally accredited courses. Good links have been established with a local work-based learning organisation that is providing level 1 vocational courses. The college is making good progress in establishing further links with local education and training providers and regional educational groups to widen the range of accredited opportunities for its learners.
 21. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. The promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity is good and clearly embedded throughout learners' programmes. The campus and the new residential accommodation are fully accessible for people with physical and sensory mobility difficulties. The college responds very effectively to meeting the needs and interests of learners and is successful in supporting learners with behaviour management difficulties. Arrangements for providing learners with specially adapted equipment and an appropriate communication medium, such as Braille, are good. There are comprehensive procedures in place to promote the safety, well being and protection of individual learners. The college is fully compliant with relevant equality and diversity legislation.
 22. Support for learners is good overall. Pre-entry and initial assessment of learners' support needs is very thorough. Useful and detailed information is discussed by the assessment team and equipment, aids, adaptations, as well

as medical, vision and support needs are carefully identified. Therapeutic support for learners is very good. There is a wide range of therapists employed by the college including speech and language, occupational and physiotherapists. They work well together as a team and produce high quality therapy programmes containing objectives closely linked to personal development and educational learning targets. Therapists work very effectively with teaching and residential staff to successfully develop learners' general mobility and communication skills. This assists greatly in building their confidence and improving their independence levels. Sensory programmes are very good and contain specific goals for learners to achieve, which are carefully monitored. Learners, where appropriate, are referred to external specialist support services such as psychologists, and counselling and advocacy agencies. Well thought out behaviour strategies and approaches are used to good effect with learners across curriculum activities.

23. Personal support provided to learners is good. All learners are allocated a personal tutor and key worker who work together effectively to ensure their personal and welfare needs are met. The tutorial process is good in providing a framework for tutors to follow to ensure learners are fully involved in assessing their own progress and achievement. The college recognises within the self-assessment report that transition arrangements are underdeveloped. Careers support and guidance is satisfactory and has improved recently with increased input from the local Connexions personal adviser. Second and third year learners now receive individual sessions to discuss possible options open to them on leaving college. However, there are no coherent and comprehensive transition plans resulting from these meetings and actions taken to help learners move to future placements are not sufficiently recorded.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

24. Leadership and management are good. Since the last inspection the college has continued to improve overall provision including major improvements in teaching and learning. Managers and leaders set a clear vision centred on a thorough understanding of the needs of learners. The college management team's views are carefully considered by the society in formulating strategic developments. Good communication systems are well established and enable very effective teamwork across all staff teams. The recently appointed principal has worked hard with the college management team in improving systems and in developing valuable links with other local providers and colleges including employers. All staff are briefed by the principal at the beginning of the week about developments. Staff feel well supported and involved in the day to day management of the college. Curriculum managers are enthusiastic and strive to continuously improve provision. The good relationship between staff contributes to their overall commitment to improve still further. Managers and other staff are clearly focused on learners achieving their potential in terms of the development of skills essential for moving successfully onto the next stage in their lives.

25. Quality assurance processes are comprehensive and very effective in raising standards in the college. The quality assurance cycle includes the review and monitoring of key teaching and learning processes. Outcomes of lesson observations are collated and are used to improve teaching and learning. This feeds into the staff appraisals and identifies areas for improvement very effectively. Good practice is regularly shared and further staff training is successfully identified. Management information systems are less effective and in need of further development. Operational plans are short term and do not include performance targets by which college performance can be accurately measured or monitored. The self-assessment report is satisfactory overall and largely accurate. The process of self-assessment appropriately involves all staff and requires curriculum managers to clearly identify and report through quality review meetings key strengths and areas for improvement. However, some of the strengths identified are overstated whilst others are too descriptive, rather than evaluative.
26. Equality of opportunity is successfully promoted throughout the curriculum. Learners make a positive contribution through the equalities and diversity committee for learners. Statutory requirements in relation to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RR(A)A) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA) are adhered to. Large capital investments have been made to improve access to college and residential buildings for wheelchair users. Policies and procedures to safeguard learners are in place and implemented effectively.
27. Staff are well qualified and demonstrate high quality skills and expertise in meeting the care and educational needs of learners. All teachers are qualified and a large proportion of staff have specialist qualifications. Residential staff have appropriate qualifications for their role. Staff training and development is extensive and further training in literacy and numeracy is planned to improve staff expertise in the development of these skills. However, staff development is not sufficiently linked to strategic and development planning. Specialist equipment and resources and accommodation are of a high standard.
28. Good support is provided by the trustees and the society. The chief executive of the society meets both informally and formally with the principal and college management team on a regular basis. The trustee board and society carefully monitor the quality of provision and discharge their statutory obligations appropriately. Financial management is good and resources are effectively deployed. The college provides good value for money.

Curriculum area inspections

Pre-vocational skills

Good: grade 2

Context

29. The pre-vocational studies curriculum is undertaken by all learners. It comprises practical and work skills, community citizenship and leisure, careers and transition planning. The curriculum is divided into 10 Henshaws' Achievement Levels (HALs), mapped against pre-entry, entry and level 1 of the national qualifications framework. All learners participate in work experience, both on the college site and externally with local employers. Enablers support learners within the curriculum. The curriculum is underpinned by the college's aims of improving learners' communication, mobility and personal skills to maximise their independence.

Strengths

- good achievement
- good teaching
- high quality work placement provision
- very good support for learners

Areas for improvement

- limited progression to vocational training
- insufficient development of literacy and numeracy

Achievements and standards

30. The college recognises that learners achieve well. In 2005, all of the 31 learners entered for external awards were successful. Within the HAL's for 2005, 76 per cent achieved their predicted level, 14 per cent achieved at a higher level than anticipated and 10 per cent underachieved by only one level. In teaching sessions learners were fully involved at individually appropriate levels and enjoyed the activities. Learners perform well within the enterprise programme. They undertake a variety of roles whilst gaining skills and understanding of the world of work. Learners on work placements gain significant increase in self-confidence. External placement records indicate real achievement in vocational skills, independence and personal development. Communication and social skills are well developed. Achievement for some learners however, is limited by insufficient recognition and accreditation of more vocationally specific skills acquired during existing activities. The college acknowledges this and is seeking further links with external organisations to provide more vocational opportunities. Learners are not always sufficiently challenged to achieve greater literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

31. Teaching is good. The majority of sessions observed were good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Tutors plan sessions well using individual targets to ensure that learners' personal and behavioural skills are addressed as well as subject specific aspects. Lessons are lively, with a practical approach which maximises suitable learning opportunities for the range of ability and interests of the learners. Learners enjoy their learning. There is keen attention to equality of opportunity. There is a strong emphasis on health and safety. Mobility skills are constantly and carefully reinforced. There is appropriate teaching of Braille skills for those learners who require it.
32. Star and subject specific goals are well rehearsed at the outset of each lesson and evaluated at the end with informative comments well recorded. They are always expressed in sufficiently specific and measurable detail to enable learners to accurately evaluate their own success. There is insufficient challenge for some learners particularly, in literacy and numeracy, where assessment information is not used systematically when planning activities. Literacy and numeracy skills are not always sufficiently reinforced or developed as opportunities arise.
33. Accommodation is of a high standard and equipment and teaching resources are good and enhance learning. Learners have the specialist equipment and resources they need to facilitate their learning. Work placements are arranged very effectively with different levels of complexity and attendance. Often learners will start their work experience programme in one of the many campus departments and then move on to a placement with an external employer. The Work Centre is very effectively used to provide a work related learning programme. The programme includes the processes of application, interviews, induction and monitoring of performance in the world of work.
34. Learners are very well supported by tutors and enablers who are skilled in managing the particular needs of their learners and in managing their behaviour using agreed strategies. Staffing levels are good.

Leadership and management

35. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum co-ordinator provides a clear strategic lead. The self-assessment report is largely accurate and detailed, though somewhat too descriptive rather than evaluative. There is an effective response to identified quality issues with plans for improvements in place. There are good procedures in place for comprehensive risk assessments. The college acknowledges that a tracking system to collect data on learners' progress needs further development.

Independent living skills and mobility

Outstanding: grade 1

Context

36. All learners participate in independent living skills and mobility, at different levels according to individual need. Independent living skills and mobility are mapped to all the 10 HALs and the college's star goals are used to set targets for and record the development of soft skills. The college is enrolling more learners who have physical difficulties in addition to their visual impairment. The mobility department has developed a programme specifically designed for wheelchair users.

Strengths

- outstanding achievements in mobility and independent living skills
- good teaching and learning
- very good multi-disciplinary support
- high quality resources
- very effective promotion of health and safety

Areas for improvement

- insufficient staff expertise in literacy, language and numeracy

Achievement and standards

37. Learners' achievements are excellent. There are clearly negotiated targets linked to the HALs and star goals. Learners are actively engaged in the reviewing and monitoring of these targets with progress to more demanding targets clearly identified and recorded. Learners demonstrate their successes by transferring practical classroom skills into their residential units and out into the community. For example, through well planned and executed meal preparation and safe travel to work experience placements. Learners take real control of their learning and the development of self-confidence and independence is outstanding. The extended curriculum activities provides further opportunities to practice their skills and for further skills development. Learners are given good opportunities to make a positive contribution, for example, sighted guide training for new staff is undertaken by the learners who have successfully completed sighted guide instructor status. Whilst there were some excellent examples of tutors and enablers integrating literacy and numeracy skills there were also some missed opportunities to further develop learners' skills.

Quality of provision

38. Teaching and learning are good overall with some outstanding teaching in both independent living skills and mobility. There was no unsatisfactory

teaching observed during inspection. In the best lessons, learners follow differentiated goals and objectives within whole class delivery of independent living skills. Learners in mobility sessions are given appropriate time to rectify errors, to self-correct and to decide if they require support. Tutors, whilst allowing learners to maintain responsibility for their own learning, ensure that their safety is paramount. A wide range of practical activities enables learners to explore and develop their skills both on campus and within the local community. Tutors make excellent use of prompt questions to check learners' understanding. Staff very effectively, promote a culture of respect and trust between themselves and learners. Teaching materials for both independent living skills and mobility are in the most appropriate format for the learner, for example, Braille and large print, and of a high quality.

39. Learners contribute very well to their pre-entry and baseline assessments. These assessments are very thorough and comprehensive. Learners who are wheelchair users undertake a wheelchair driving test when they ready to do so, either on enrolment or at a later stage. Individual learning plans are based on these assessments and used very effectively to review progress. Learners participate well in the very effective review of learning that takes place at end of each session. Programmes for both independent living skills and mobility are designed to meet the individual needs of learners very effectively. Good use is made of the residences to reinforce formal living skills training. The HALs provides a clear framework for progression and are regularly and thoroughly reviewed through the tutorial system.
40. Support for learners is very good. Staff working in the independent living skills and mobility programmes work very effectively with therapy specialists. There is a high level of staff-learner ratio which is having a positive effect on the learners' experiences and achievement.

Leadership and management

41. Leadership and management are good. Staff are well trained and qualified and highly experienced in teaching independent living skills and mobility. Accommodation is of a very high quality and well resourced with a wide range of adapted specialist equipment. Communications between staff are very good. There is very effective promotion of health and safety in teaching sessions. Staff are appropriately involved in the self assessment process. The college recognises that whilst they are making progress in embedding literacy, language and numeracy across the curriculum, there is a need to develop staff more effectively in recognising and supporting literacy, language and numeracy.