



Lufton College of Further Education



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published March 2006	Provider reference 50016
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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Lufton College of Further Education
Type of college:	Independent specialist residential
Principal:	Tess Baber
Address of college:	Lufton, Yeovil, Somerset, BA22 8ST
Telephone number:	01935 403130
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Chair of governors:	Linda Cooper
Unique reference number:	50016
Name of reporting inspector:	Joyce Deere
Dates of inspection:	17 - 20 January 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Lufton College is one of three further education colleges that form the Mencap National College. It is based on two sites on the rural outskirts of Yeovil. Established in 1969 as a rural training unit, it now offers full-time residential education for learners aged 16-25 years, who have a range of learning difficulties and disabilities from moderate to severe. These include learners with autistic spectrum disorder and some with hearing loss. The college's mission is 'preparing students for the next stage in their lives'. The college has 122 learners, and has increased its enrolments by 40 per cent since the previous inspection. Two learners are funded by ELWA. Seventy-one learners are male and nine are of minority ethnic heritage. Six attend on a day basis.
2. The college offers vocational training in the areas of small animal care, horticulture and grounds maintenance. There is a fully equipped car-vaiting workshop, carpentry workshop, pottery, art facilities and a café. All learners follow a Mencap award based on life skills. The college has recently increased the range of entry level accredited courses for learners. Mencap was in the process of recruiting senior staff at the time of inspection, and the assistant principal was temporarily acting as principal. Three day-care officers manage the medication and medical needs of learners and a speech and language therapist attends for one day a week. Other specialists may be accessed if required. Staff numbers have risen significantly to around 195. Accommodation ranges from fully-supported provision in the main houses to semi-supported or self-catering in flats, bungalows and houses across the two sites. The college has 10 houses in the community, accommodating 35 learners.

Scope of the inspection

3. 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

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Capacity to improve	Inadequate: grade 4
Achievements and standards	Satisfactory: grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory : grade 3
Leadership and management	Inadequate: grade 4

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

4. Learners' achievements are satisfactory overall. Recording of non-accredited learning is not sufficiently rigorous and does not enable the college to identify clear progress over time. The number of learners achieving units on accredited programmes has increased to 30%. The quality of work in vocational practical lessons is good and most learners make satisfactory progress in independent living skills. Learners enjoy their time at the college and most work with enthusiasm and confidence.
5. Standards in teaching and learning have declined, and the quality of teaching and learning is now mostly satisfactory. Lesson planning and recording of progress are unsatisfactory. Initial and baseline assessment are based on the requirements of an award, and do not give a sufficiently full picture of learners' abilities and needs. Target-setting arrangements have improved recently, but individual targets are not always meaningfully expressed or appropriate.
6. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. Learners have diverse needs and are recruited nationally. The number of learners of black and minority ethnic heritage has increased slightly, but little of the premises is accessible for wheelchair users. The practical learning activities, extended curriculum and community engagement are good. Staff foster a climate of respect in working with learners, but equality of opportunity and issues relating to personal relationships and sexuality are not formally promoted within the curriculum. The college has been slow to update its safeguarding policies in relation to child and adult protection.
7. Support and guidance for learners are satisfactory overall. Most learners receive satisfactory levels of support. Revised care plans are satisfactory, although risk assessments need further development. Specialist assessment and support for learners' communication needs is insufficient. The formal structure for learner behaviour management is not developed adequately. Learners have satisfactory access to a range of external support services when needed.
8. Leadership and management are inadequate. The recently appointed assistant principal is currently managing the college, following several months of difficulties at senior management level. The quality of provision has declined significantly since the last inspection. Management information systems and curriculum and operational management are not effective. Adequate systems are in place to tackle discrimination, but progress against the Special Needs and Disability Act 2001, SENDA, and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000,

RR(A)A, has been slow. The governing body has not ensured timely compliance with legislative requirements. Financial management is generally sound and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Capacity to improve

Inadequate: grade 4

9. The college's review of its performance has improved very recently, but it does not have sufficiently rigorous quality assurance systems. Aspects of target setting, monitoring and measurement remain weak. A permanent senior management team has yet to be appointed. Whilst senior managers and governors are beginning to take appropriate action, the most recent self-assessment report does not accurately identify all key areas for improvement. Several key strengths are overstated.

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

10. The effectiveness of actions by leaders and managers to address issues identified at the last inspection has been inadequate. Most of the college's previous key strengths have not been maintained, and standards overall have declined. Compliance against legislative responsibilities has been slow. Areas previously identified as requiring improvement have not been sufficiently addressed.

Key strengths of the college

- the good opportunities for learning in practical settings
- the programme for enrichment and community engagement
- the development of an ethos of respect in working with learners
- staff development opportunities

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- insufficient specialist assessment and interventions
- the failure of the quality assurance procedures to identify the declining standards
- slow promotion of equality of opportunity in the curriculum
- the lack of a management structure that defines key accountabilities
- the arrangements for the development of literacy and numeracy provision
- the failure of governors and managers to ensure that the college complies in a timely fashion to legislative requirements
- the management of health and safety

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

11. There are no differences between the achievements of different age groups of learners. Learners' achievements are satisfactory overall. The majority of learners are involved in non-accredited learning. Recording of non-accredited learning is not sufficiently rigorous, and does not enable the college to identify clear progress over time. Achievement of primary learning goals is based on completion of the programme, rather than adequate recording of progress. Baseline assessment is not sufficiently rigorous and does not include prior attainment. The number of learners achieving on accredited programmes has increased. In 2002/2003, 18 learners achieved external accreditation. This increased to 33 learners in 2004/2005. Learners value the monthly celebrations of achievement during which certificates of achievement are presented.
12. The quality of some learners' work in vocational practical lessons is good. Most learners demonstrate a satisfactory awareness of health and safety in vocational areas and most improve their behaviour and make satisfactory or better progress in independent living skills. However, some learners remain on this programme after they have achieved these skills. The development of literacy and numeracy skills is hindered by the lack of a cross-college strategy. Learners enjoy their experience at the college and most work with enthusiasm and confidence.
13. Punctuality and attendance are good. The retention rate is in line with other specialist colleges. Destinations are satisfactory. Of the 34 leavers in 2004/05, the majority returned home or went into supported living accommodation. A significant number attend general further education college. The number of leavers progressing into employment-related destinations has increased with three learners involved in supported employment and two with paid employment. At the time of the inspection, 30 learners were on internal work experience placements and 11 were on placements external to the college.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

14. The previous inspection identified teaching as very good. Standards have since declined, and the quality of teaching and learning is now satisfactory overall, with teaching observations by the college and inspectors including the full range of grades.
15. In better lessons, teachers use questions skilfully to help learners find their own solutions to problems or to discover the underlying reasons for practices. They differentiate well when setting tasks for different ability levels within groups. Teachers give encouraging verbal feedback to learners, focusing

strongly on even the smallest achievements. Staff know the learners in their teaching groups well and respond appropriately to their behavioural needs. Learners' individual ways of expressing distress or frustration are respected, and they may be given more or less attention, depending on their needs. Communication with learners is generally satisfactory but speech sometimes lacks visual reinforcement. Teachers do not always check that learners are watching when using sign. Signing by both teachers and learners is not always clear. ICT resources have improved. All staff have laptops. However, there is insufficient use of ICT in lessons.

16. Initial and baseline assessments are based largely on the requirements of an award. They do not give a sufficiently full picture of learners' abilities and needs. The arrangements for target setting have improved very recently, with newly designed individual learning plans which include vocational and literacy and numeracy targets. Progress recording in lessons against small vocational targets has recently become more widespread. However, not all targets are expressed in language that is easily understood by staff or learners, and there is still too much emphasis on setting behavioural goals in ILPs and on recording overall termly progress against these. Literacy and numeracy targets are often selected by staff without expertise in this area. Targets are not changed frequently enough once achieved or found to be inappropriate. Formal lesson planning is rudimentary.
17. The programmes overall are satisfactory. Enrichment provision is good. The college provides a very wide range of leisure options. The student council provides learners with the opportunity to take part in decision-making. Learners make regular use of the local facilities, and a few learners attend a local FE college. Local community groups make use of college facilities. The curriculum provides learners with good opportunities for practical learning. The college has increased the opportunities for accreditation and for work-placements, and transition arrangements are good. The timetable structure is not sufficiently flexible to allow for different needs and attention spans of learners. All learners have formal daily living skills programmes on their timetables, although some have already achieved these skills. The skills developed in work-experience are not built upon in the rest of the programme.
18. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. Learners attending the college have diverse needs and are recruited from across the country. The number of learners of black and minority ethnic heritage has increased, but very little of the premises is accessible for wheelchair users. The level of specialist intervention is too low, and the provision for literacy and numeracy is in the early stages of development. Staff foster a climate of respect, but equality of opportunity and issues relating to personal relationships and sexuality are not formally promoted within the curriculum. The college has been slow to update its safeguarding policies in relation to child and adult protection.

19. Support and guidance for learners are satisfactory. Most learners receive satisfactory levels of support, although learning support assistants are not always effectively deployed. Communications with parents and carers are effective. Most learners have regular, planned one-to-one tutorials which are effective in providing opportunities for them to discuss a range of issues. However, tutorial record keeping needs further development. Care plans have been recently revised and improved, and are now satisfactory, but risk assessments need further development. An appropriate anti-bullying process exists, and learners have confidence that satisfactory actions are taken when needed. Links with the local Connexions service are good.
20. There is insufficient specialist assessment and support for learners' communication needs. The total communication strategy is being developed and supported by the speech and language therapist. The direct support is not sufficiently developed for learners with complex language needs, nor for those with more general communication difficulties, and some communication skills assessments for day students are not carried out in a timely manner. The behaviour management process for learner support is not sufficiently integrated across the college, and the formal structure for behaviour management is not developed adequately. There is little checking or co-ordination of behaviour management strategies used by staff. Learners have satisfactory access to a range of external support services when needed. There is also satisfactory access to a counsellor on-site.

Leadership and management

Inadequate: grade 4

21. Leadership and management are inadequate. The recently appointed assistant principal is currently managing the college, following several months of difficulties at senior management level. A senior management restructure is underway. Much of the quality of the college's provision has declined significantly since the last inspection. Learner numbers have grown by around 40%. Very recent changes to address key weaknesses have not yet impacted sufficiently to bring about improvements.
22. Quality assurance is not consistently rigorous. The lesson observations scheme is well designed and embedded. Most joint observations with inspectors revealed broad agreement about strengths and weaknesses in lessons undertaken with the college's own observers. However, too many significant weaknesses in quality assurance procedures and monitoring remain. Eight of the nine previous key strengths have not been maintained. Management information systems are weak and not yet effective in tracking learners' achievements. Minimal progress has been made in developing RARPA.
23. Much curriculum and operational management across the college currently lacks coherence. Accountability for learner support and health and safety is not clear. The monitoring of actions against health and safety issues is weak. Literacy and numeracy management is in the early stages of development, and

currently no staff have the appropriate qualifications and experience to drive this provision forward.

24. Opportunities for staff development are good. More recently communication between staff and managers has improved. Staff morale is improving. Staff recruitment procedures are rigorous and many staff have, or are working towards, an appropriate level of qualification. However, many lecturers teach subjects in which they have little expertise. Learning support workers are not always suitably equipped to support a diverse range of individual learner needs effectively. Adequate systems are in place to tackle discrimination, but equality of opportunity is not systematically promoted.
25. Accommodation and the standard of specialist equipment overall is adequate. Several rooms used for teaching are in a poor state and are not fit for purpose. Progress against SENDA has been slow. Very little of the site is easily accessible for wheelchair users. There has been a significant increase in investment in ILT, but there are insufficient computers based within vocational areas and teaching rooms.
26. Governors provide a diverse range of skills and expertise. However, they have been slow to recognise and address the college's declining performance. In addition, managers and governors have not ensured that the college has met legislative requirements, such as formal arrangements for safeguarding learners, in a timely manner. The college is not presently compliant under the Race Relations (amendment) Act (RRA) 2000. Financial management is generally sound. The college provides satisfactory value for money.