



Regent College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Inspection report

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| Audience Post-sixteen | Published January 2007 | Provider reference 131968 |
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Basic information about the college

Name of college: Regent College

Type of college: Independent specialist

Principal: Wendy Williams

Address of college: 77, Shelton New Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire,
ST4 7AA

Telephone number: 01782 275481

Fax number: 01782 209800

Chair of governors: n/a

Unique reference number: 131968

Name of lead inspector: Margaret Hobson, ALI

Dates of inspection: 6 – 9 November 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Regent is an independent specialist college (ISC) offering day provision for students aged 16-25 years. Currently, there are 10 learners attending the college via a franchise arrangement with Stoke-on-Trent College, 20 learners who are funded directly by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and one learner funded jointly by LSC, Educational and Learning Wales (ELWa) and social services. There are two learners of ethnic minority heritage. The college was established in 1999 by Shelton Care Ltd to meet the needs of learners who could not access mainstream further education. All young people attending the college have learning difficulties ranging from moderate to severe. The majority have complex needs, some have autistic spectrum disorders and three have physical disabilities.
2. The college operates from one building which also accommodates the head office of Shelton Care Ltd. The college's new mission from September 2006 is 'developing independence in an adult world through communication, social and life skills'. The educational programme is aimed at developing learner skills through individual programmes, and uses a range of local community facilities for community awareness, leisure, recreation and gardening. On-site is a house which is used for daily living and household skills, as well as daytime enrichment activities. Few of the learners undertake national awards. The college does not have a board of governors but is overseen by the two directors of Shelton Care Ltd.
3. The college employs 27 staff (full-time equivalents), of whom 12 are teaching staff. The head of learning leads a team of three full-time and seven part-time tutors, three of whom have dual roles in learning support. The vice principal has overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the college and direct line management of the college nurse, the head of learning, the college co-ordinator and the quality assurance manager. A formal arrangement exists with the local primary care trust for a specialist speech and language therapist to be onsite for one day a week. This has recently been increased from half a day.

Scope of the inspection

4. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: 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 visit; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the college was given ISC status. 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 | Inadequate: grade 4 |
| Capacity to improve | Inadequate: grade 4 |
| Achievements and standards | Inadequate: grade 4 |
| Quality of provision | Inadequate: grade 4 |
| 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

Inadequate: grade 4

5. This is an inadequate college. Achievement overall is inadequate. There are no opportunities to accredit achievement in literacy, numeracy and subject-specific skills even where this is appropriate for learners. Non-accredited learning is not well recorded which has hindered the monitoring and reporting of learner achievement. Many learners are underachieving, though many have made progress against behavioural targets. There is no recorded achievement of specific literacy and numeracy skills. However, learners enjoy their time at college and many develop personal confidence and social communication skills with an increase in independence.
6. Teaching and learning are inadequate. The limited specialist qualifications and expertise of teaching and support staff result in a significant number of unsatisfactory aspects of teaching and learning. The strategy to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills is poorly developed. Teaching lacks challenge for many learners; tasks set are often too easy. There is minimal use of communication aids or signing to support the many learners with complex needs. Overall, the use of resources for teaching and learning is limited.
7. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is inadequate. The range of curriculum activities is limited and is delivered within local community settings. Opportunities for learners to access vocational experience are insufficient. Learners contribute satisfactorily to the local community through fundraising activities. There is no student forum for learners to have a corporate voice. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to promote the safety and wellbeing of learners.
8. The college's provision for advice, guidance and support for learners is satisfactory overall. Learners have satisfactory access to external specialist support services. The college's strategy for supporting learners' communication skills is underdeveloped although clear plans are in place to improve this. Learners have good access to advocacy services. Advice and guidance are satisfactory overall but the learner handbook is not available in a range of appropriate formats. Behaviour management and tutorial support are satisfactory overall.
9. Leadership and management are inadequate. Whilst there are high levels of pastoral care and commitment by managers at all levels, staff do not have sufficiently clear leadership and direction to ensure the necessary high quality education. Development planning, quality improvement processes and curriculum planning are unsatisfactory. Operational management is effective and appropriate procedures for safeguarding learners are in place. The parent

company, Shelton Care Ltd, does not provide adequate critical oversight of the educational provision and financial planning is insufficient. The college provides inadequate value for money.

Capacity to improve

Inadequate: grade 4

10. The college does not show adequate capacity for improvement. The self-assessment report is inadequate since it does not provide sufficient detail and demonstrate sufficient understanding of the key issues. It identified some of the weaknesses but overestimated the strengths, principally due to inadequate information about learners' achievements and the quality of the provision. The college has accepted the findings of a recent annual assessment visit and has made plans to address the issues raised. However, there has not been sufficient time to implement these plans and to show whether they will improve the quality of the provision. While the staff show a commitment to supporting managers to raise standards and enthusiastically address new initiatives, actions have not yet brought about necessary improvements.

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

11. This is the first inspection of this provision.

Key strengths of the college

- use of local community facilities to extend learner experience
- access to advocacy services for learners.

The college should address:

- recording and tracking of achievement
- provision for literacy, numeracy and communication
- links between assessment, individual learning plans (ILPs) and session planning
- critical oversight by parent company
- the quality improvement procedures
- specialist teaching expertise and qualifications
- full compliance with the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001).

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Inadequate: grade 4

12. Achievement overall is inadequate. The self-assessment report overestimates the achievement levels of its learners. It indicates that national awards are used where appropriate but learners able to attain awards do not have the opportunity to do so. In previous years, learners were entered for a national communications award with 100% success in 2004/05; though none were entered last year.
13. Many learners are underachieving. Although most make adequate progress against behavioural targets, within specific curriculum areas progress and achievement is not well documented. This has hindered the monitoring, reporting and celebrating of learner achievement. Though the college indicates that Skills for Life are embedded in lessons, few learners make progress in developing these skills.
14. Learners enjoy their time at college. The majority participate well in lessons, particularly those which take place in the community. Many develop personal confidence, social communication and travel skills with an increase in independence. Parents report that an increase in these skills improves their family's quality of life. Work-related skill acquisition is limited.
15. Last year, no learners progressed onto training or employment although 10 learners had this as their long term aim. Nearly one third moved onto other college provision. Attendance and retention is good, as expected for a specialist college.

Quality of provision

Inadequate: grade 4

16. Teaching and learning are inadequate overall. Initial and baseline assessment is comprehensive but overly detailed, leading to appropriate personal goals. However, these outcomes do not adequately inform planning or delivery in lessons. The links between assessment, individual learning plans (ILPs) and lesson planning are not clear. Recent changes have been made to the format of target setting but it is too early to judge the full impact. The focus on individual programmes has hindered any useful curriculum development. Curriculum planning in six-weekly blocks of learning does not provide a coherent overview for learners' development and the range of curriculum activities is limited.
17. The limited specialist qualifications and expertise of staff result in a significant number of unsatisfactory aspects of teaching and learning, including poor target setting for learning. Few targets are specific or measurable and some are over-precise and limiting. For many learners there is a lack of challenge; tasks set are too easy. While there is a high level of learner support, in too many

instances over-support hinders learning and achievement, and tutors do not always manage this adequately. However, in the minority of better lessons, ILP goals were clearly linked to appropriate subject-specific learning goals and behaviour management strategies were applied consistently leading to effective learning. There is insufficient use of communication aids or signing in lessons to support the many learners with complex communication needs.

18. The strategy to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills is inadequate. Initial assessment of needs is adequate but fails to inform lesson planning. Teaching in this area does not adequately enable learners to develop their skills. There are too many missed opportunities to teach specific skills at appropriate levels for individual learners.
19. The use of resources for teaching and learning is limited. Whilst audio-visual teaching resources are available few were observed in use other than a camera to record activities. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning is underdeveloped. There is little additional teaching material displayed around the college. Few additional resources for literacy and numeracy were readily available. There was little use of IT software to support learning or vary activity. However, good use is made of local facilities to extend learners' experience of the community and access sports.
20. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. Equality and diversity are satisfactorily promoted within college activities. The college provides a high level of care for learners within lessons and promotes satisfactory behaviour management which enables learners to experience community venues. Issues relating to personal relationships and sexuality are promoted adequately within the personal development curriculum and on an individual basis. Learners contribute satisfactorily to the local community through fundraising activities.
21. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is inadequate. While the college makes good use of the local venues available to extend learners' community experience, it does not provide an adequately structured approach in which learners can achieve what they need to learn. The language used in targets is overly complex and not understood by many learners. The learner handbook is not available in a range of appropriate formats. Opportunities for learners to access vocational experience are insufficient. Currently, one learner is on work placement. Access to national accreditation in literacy, numeracy or subject-specific skills is insufficient even where assessment indicates that this is appropriate for the learner. The college communication strategy does not adequately meet the needs of learners with complex needs. A limited range of enrichment activities is offered to learners during lunchtime. There is no student forum for learners to have a corporate voice, nor is there a communal area for learners to socialise. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to promote the safety and wellbeing of learners.

22. The college's provision for advice, guidance and support for learners is satisfactory. Learners have satisfactory access to specialist support through links with external agencies. Individual care for learners is good through the full-time nurse. Learners have good access to advocacy services. The college's strategy for supporting learners' communication skills is underdeveloped. Recent individual communication strategies are not consistently implemented and there is insufficient use of pictorial communication for learners with complex needs. However, clear plans are in place to develop this strategy further. Potential learners receive satisfactory advice and guidance before entry to the college through a programme of taster visits. The learner induction is now satisfactory. The transition programme is satisfactory and is integrated within the termly review process. Behaviour management is satisfactory, though there is some variation in intervention plans and in their implementation. Tutorial support is satisfactory overall.

Leadership and management

Inadequate: grade 4

23. Leadership and management are inadequate. Whilst there are high levels of pastoral care and commitment by managers at all levels, staff do not have sufficiently clear leadership and direction to ensure the necessary high quality education. Development planning and monitoring of the provision lack rigour; there is no business plan, nor whole college performance indicators against which to measure progress year on year. Planning in relation to the curriculum is underdeveloped. The college has yet to implement rigorous and robust quality improvement procedures.
24. The self-assessment process is consultative, but insufficiently robust and does not identify all areas for improvement that were found by inspectors. Critical oversight and support by the parent company, Shelton Care Ltd, are inadequate. For example, comprehensive reports about learners' achievements and progress on quality improvements are not regularly requested from college senior managers. Not all staff fully understand the quality improvement arrangements. Recent lesson observations have not been graded, documentation is cumbersome and target setting for improvement is poor. Although access to professional development is good, not enough staff are sufficiently trained and have the specialist experience to meet the further educational needs of the college's learners. There is minimal systematic review of the effectiveness of the curriculum; the college is aware of this weakness. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures are reviewed and updated regularly by senior managers but there is little monitoring of the effectiveness of these policies.
25. Partnerships with other education providers and agencies do not always include adequate contractual arrangements to ensure clarity of expectations. For example, Stoke-on-Trent College does not have a formal contract with Regent. Management information systems are at an early stage of development. Day-to-day operational arrangements are effective and communication across staff teams is good. Learning support staff are adequately supervised. The appraisal

system and induction processes are satisfactory overall. Resources to support teaching and learning are developing. Wireless internet is now available for staff and learners but, overall, ICT is not used effectively.

26. There are suitable arrangements for safeguarding learners, including a central vetting and recruitment record. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory; however, the college is not fully compliant with the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001). All staff have had training in relation to their responsibilities under this legislation. An accessibility audit has been undertaken but the implementation of plans to make necessary improvements have been slow. Accommodation remains unfit for purpose overall; teaching areas are cramped and the lift is yet to be installed so that people who are wheelchair users can gain access to all three floors in the college. The achievements of learners are not analysed in relation to race, disability or gender.
27. There is inadequate financial planning and management. The college was unable to demonstrate that financial information was separate from the Shelton Care Ltd budget, as required in the funding agreement with the LSC. Furthermore, there is not a clear plan to demonstrate how planned expenditure will match expected income. The college does not provide satisfactory value for money.