



Loppington House FEU



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Audience
Post-sixteen

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131914

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Basic information about the college

Name of college: Loppington House FEU and AC

Type of college: Independent specialist college

Principal: Carolyn Parkes

Address of college: Loppington, Wem, Shropshire, SY4 5NF

Telephone number: 01939 233926

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Unique reference number: 131914

Name of lead inspector: Diane Stacey, ALI

Dates of inspection: 6 - 8 March 2007

Background of the organisation

1. Loppington House is privately owned and situated in a rural area of North Shropshire. The further education unit (FEU) is owned by the director and managed by a newly constituted management team including the principal. The centre opened in 1983 as a further education unit for learners between 16-25 years of age. Since 1986, long term residential facilities have been provided in the grounds of Loppington House and in local villages. All of the long term residents have been learners in the education facility. From 2004, the education centre has offered places to learners between the ages of 19-25 years.
2. Learners are recruited from across England and Wales. There are 11 learners funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and one funded by the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning (DELL). Ten are male and two are female. All learners have severe learning difficulties and behaviours that challenge; some also have disabilities such as hearing impairment, sight impairment and physical difficulties.
3. The full-time educational curriculum includes gardening, life skills, art and craft and a projects department. Loppington House has a retail shop and workshop, both situated in the local town of Wem. Loppington FEU also has links with local further education colleges.
4. The college's mission is 'to offer resources that enable an individual to develop his/her potential for independence and achieve a fulfilled life. The emphasis being on the user's needs and ensuring that the user will have as much responsibility for his/her own life as possible. The overall aim is for each young man and woman to gain the skills needed to reintegrate into community life'.

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.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Inadequate: grade 4
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

Inadequate: grade 4

6. Learners' achievements are satisfactory. The majority of learners make significant progress in developing communication skills. They increase their social skills and self-confidence well. Satisfactory progress is made in developing practical skills but few learners have opportunities to acquire workplace skills. Target setting is weak and does not sufficiently identify learners' overall needs or a sufficiently broad range of targets.
7. Teaching is satisfactory. Literacy, numeracy and communication are satisfactorily embedded into all areas of learners' programmes. Lessons are well planned and behaviour management is appropriate. Good use is made of signing and pictorial resources but there is insufficient use of information communication technology (ICT) in lessons. Assessments are satisfactory but individual learning plans (ILPs) do not reflect appropriate aims and objectives of learners.
8. There is good use of practical activities in the daytime curriculum but enrichment activities are not used appropriately to plan or reinforce learning. Extended activities and links with local colleges are satisfactory. Arrangements for the health and safety of learners are satisfactory. The work experience programme is very limited and inadequately planned. Social and educational inclusion is inadequate.
9. The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Learners' personal support is good and they feel there is help available when they need it. Speech and language therapy support is good. Preparation for transition is unsatisfactory and there is insufficient gathering and use of learners' views. There is insufficient direction from planning and target setting to ensure needs are met as well as they could be.
10. The quality of leadership and management is inadequate. The college runs smoothly and has effective day-to-day management. The new college managers are committed to improving provision but are not suitably experienced or trained to achieve this. Quality assurance procedures, improvement and strategic planning are unsatisfactory. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently accurate as it is not based on a sufficiently broad base of evidence and rigorous monitoring of quality. Appropriate procedures for safeguarding learners are in place. The college does not fulfil its responsibilities to monitor and promote equality and diversity. The college does not provide satisfactory value for money.

Capacity to improve

Inadequate: grade 4

11. The college's capacity to improve is inadequate. While the new college managers are well supported by staff in their commitment to make improvements, they are not sufficiently experienced and have not received training for their new roles. The self-assessment report is unsatisfactory. It is not based on sufficiently broad evidence and rigorous monitoring of quality. Improvement plans are detailed but omit several important areas. There has been inadequate improvement made since the last inspection in some of the identified weaknesses. Management information and strategic planning are underdeveloped.

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

12. The college has made inadequate progress in addressing the key issues of the previous inspection. The development of speech and language therapy support has improved and is now good. The college has developed its strategies for behaviour management well. Teachers now have appropriate qualifications or are currently working towards one. The planning for learners' transition on exit from the college is still not satisfactory. Whilst there are meetings to discuss transition arrangements there is no formal transition programme in place to help learners prepare for the next stage of their lives. The college is not yet compliant with equalities responsibilities and quality assurance arrangements are inadequate.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- good progress in communication and social skills
- good use of practical activities for learning
- good pastoral support
- good speech and language therapy support.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- weak target setting
- inadequate work experience programme and acquisition of workplace skills
- insufficient gathering and use of learners' views
- inadequate preparation for transition
- unsatisfactory self-assessment
- ineffective improvement planning

- insufficient monitoring and promotion of equality and diversity
- inadequate quality assurance arrangements
- underdeveloped strategic planning.

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Satisfactory: grade 3

13. Learners' achievements are satisfactory. All learners are involved in non-accredited learning. The college is planning to provide a small range of externally accredited qualifications but this is not yet in place. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that non-accredited achievements are recognised and celebrated appropriately through college certificates of achievement and in the extensive wall displays around the college.
14. The majority of learners make significant progress in developing their communication skills. A speech and language therapist ensures that all learners are assessed with targets set at the start of their placement. Inspectors agreed with the college that learners increase their social skills and self-confidence well and deal with situations that they have previously found difficult.
15. Learners enjoy their work and make satisfactory progress in developing practical skills in gardening, living skills and art and craft. However, the college has been slow to progress learners in achieving workplace skills. Opportunities to gain work skills are very limited. Some learners help with cleaning the visitor's flat and recently a small number of learners have been attending Loppington House's workshop and retail outlet in the local village to develop craft related skills and retail skills.
16. The setting of targets is weak and does not sufficiently identify learners' needs or identify a sufficiently broad range of targets. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. The recording of targets on ILPs focuses on skills for life targets. Few targets are set for their main objective of attending the college, that is, to improve and progress in independent living. Two targets are set for literacy, numeracy and communication, one for the education part of their programme and one for residential activities. The division of these targets is inappropriate.
17. Rates of retention, attendance and punctuality are satisfactory and in line with other specialist colleges. Destinations are satisfactory with the majority of learners over the past three years moving into supported living accommodation.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

18. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and in line with teaching observations by the college and the self-assessment report. Teachers are now either qualified or are working towards an appropriate teaching qualification. Literacy, numeracy and communication are satisfactorily embedded into all areas of learners' programmes. Lessons are planned well; teachers and support staff know learners well and respond appropriately to their behaviour needs. They use

questions skilfully to help learners find their own solutions to problems and give encouraging verbal feedback to learners when they show progress in small achievements. Good use is made of signing and pictorial resources to assist learners in developing their communication skills.

19. The college acknowledges that there is still insufficient use of ICT in learning situations. There are few computers and associated software programmes to assist with learning. While learners have access to a computer in their residences, there is no internet connection. Currently, access to the internet is only available in two areas.
20. Assessments are satisfactory. Pre-entry assessments are undertaken by two senior members of staff who visit the prospective learner's home or school. Once accepted, learners are invited to the college as part of the transition into college. However, there are no multi-disciplinary assessments until learners' enrol at the college. Baseline assessments are thorough and inform the development of a very useful pen portrait after the first term. Annual assessments are comprehensive and detailed.
21. Individual learning plans adequately record strategies for both managing behaviour and for effective communication needs of learners, but do not record a sufficiently broad range of targets that reflect learners' overall aims and objectives.
22. There is good use of practical activities as a basis for learning with learners working on a variety of tasks in gardening, life skills, art and craft or project work. These practical activities encourage learning and are reinforced through visits to local community shops and cafes. One day a week is used to provide learners with a range of enrichment activities, such as swimming, gym, or horse riding. However, inspectors disagreed with the college that enrichment activities are well planned. Activities are not used appropriately to plan or reinforce learning. Extended activities are satisfactory and are often learner-led. There are satisfactory links with a local college with two learners currently enrolled on a horticulture course. Links with other local colleges are currently being explored. Attention to health and safety of learners is satisfactory. Individual risk assessments are in place for learners and most physical resources and activities are risk assessed. However, not all external activities are risk assessed.
23. There is a very limited work experience programme which has not been developed adequately since the last inspection. There is no formal work experience programme. The only work experience on campus involves cleaning the visitor flat and two learners are currently accessing Loppington House's craft workshop and shop in the local town for work experience one day a week. Currently the college is negotiating more work placements with a local national trust establishment, but this is not yet available for learners.

24. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is inadequate. Weaknesses in ILPs and target setting do not ensure a sufficiently broad range of learning are always focused upon. There are too few opportunities when learners' views are sought. There is an emphasis on improving their literacy and numeracy skills. Learners' communication skills are improved well. They have good contact with the community through the college's shop but overall there is insufficient opportunity to gain work experience. The college does not fulfil its responsibilities to monitor and promote equality and diversity.
25. The quality of support and guidance is satisfactory overall. Pastoral support is good, and students feel they are given help when they need it. Tutorials are satisfactory. They provide an opportunity each half-term for staff to discuss and review with students their ILPs and targets. However, the value of these occasions is reduced by the weaknesses in this planning and target setting. The college has correctly identified that records of these meetings do not contain sufficient evaluation of the progress made.
26. Regular review meetings, including through the attendance of a Connexions personal adviser, ensures plans are developed for when learners leave college. However, learners' programmes are not routinely adapted to prepare them as well as possible for this transition.
27. There are good opportunities for learners to speak with an independent advocate who visits the college regularly. However, overall there are too few other occasions when teachers and managers seek learners' views, for example, through meetings with groups of learners. A learner survey was undertaken two years ago and the college is working with speech and language therapists on the next survey.
28. Learners receive good support from speech and language therapists. This includes detailed assessment, direct work with groups of learners and staff training, although the therapists are not adequately involved at the pre-admission stage. An appropriate range of other specialist support is available to meet the range of students' needs.

Leadership and management

Inadequate: grade 4

29. Leadership and management are inadequate. Inspectors disagree with the college's evaluation and consider that insufficient consideration was given to the areas for improvement that were correctly identified within the self-assessment report.
30. The new college managers are committed to meeting learners' needs and improving the quality of the provision. They have successfully improved the tutorial support and promoted a supportive college ethos. However, they do not have adequate training or experience to ensure they can provide the necessary clear direction and expertise to achieve the required improvements.

31. The college runs smoothly and has effective day-to-day management. However, improvement planning is not sufficiently comprehensive or effective. Some important areas are not adequately covered in improvement plans, for example, how to raise the quality of teaching and learning. There is insufficient rigour in monitoring important aspects of provision to ensure strengths are shared and areas for improvement are identified and can be tackled successfully. Teaching and learning observations are regularly undertaken, but observation reports focus almost exclusively on what the teacher does without indicating how well learners are learning. The college is aware that management information systems are underdeveloped and such information is not adequately used to inform improvement. The self-assessment report also accurately identifies that strategic planning is underdeveloped.
32. Self-assessment is not satisfactory. All staff are involved in this process, contributing their views and commenting on the draft self-assessment report. However, the report does not show that a sufficiently broad range of evidence has been considered in the judgements that have been made, and the importance of some of the areas for improvement is not always recognised.
33. As at the last inspection, the college is not sufficiently monitoring and promoting race relations and disability equality. There are suitable procedures to safeguard learners. Appropriate recruitment checks take place on all staff and this information is recorded on a single central register. The college is aware that a very small number of staff are awaiting training in the protection of vulnerable adults.
34. Staff qualifications have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. All teachers are qualified or currently undertaking training to become qualified. There is good commitment to staff training and support. New staff undertake appropriate training as part of their induction. There are subsequent opportunities to develop further skills in such areas as communication development and managing challenging behaviour.
35. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall, although there are too few ICT facilities. Teaching and learning accommodation is satisfactory. Inspectors agree with the most recent Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) inspection that residential accommodation will benefit from the intended programme of improvement.
36. Regular external auditing indicates sound financial management. The college meets its contractual requirements with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide agreed levels of support for each learner. The college however, provides inadequate value for money.