

Hinwick Hall College

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Hinwick Hall College
Type of college:	Independent, specialist, residential
Principal:	Eugene Sinnott
Address of college:	Hinwick Wellingborough Northamptonshire NN29 7JD
Telephone number:	01933 312470
Fax number:	01933 412470
Chair of governors:	David Wrestcott
Reference number*:	133098
Name of reporting inspector:	Susan Preece HMI
Dates of inspection:	30 June - 3 July 2003

**charity or registered business number of the company running the college*

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

The college's overall aim is to educate, train and support young people with disabilities so that their potential for as effective an adulthood as possible is a realistic aspiration. The philosophy of the college is based on Christian principles, the belief in the dignity of the individual and of the individual's right to be in charge of as much of their own life as possible. The college positively welcomes students from all faiths, denominations and backgrounds.

How effective is the college?

The standard and quality of education and training is good overall. The quality of creative arts programmes is outstanding, that of the social and life skills programmes is good, and that of the

learning goals. Provision is primarily focused on practical activities. Transition arrangements are very good and students are effectively prepared for their future lives. The residential provision is good with outstanding support for students.

The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- significant progress in achievement of primary learning goals
- very high standards of care and support
- much good teaching to promote communication and decision-making skills
- outstanding teaching in creative arts
- a very good range of enrichment programmes
- a very good transition programme
- good links between assessment and individual learning plans
- good evaluation of education provision
- detailed management information systems
- very good therapy support.

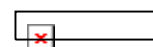
What should be improved

- level of challenge in a minority of areas of teaching

- rigour in target setting
- planning of lessons to meet the needs of all students
- effective strategic oversight of governors
- coherence and consistency of quality assurance systems.

Further aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in the sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

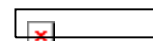


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5)

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory: The college curriculum framework provides good opportunities for the development and practice of communication skills. Students achieve high standards, supported by experienced teachers using skilful teaching strategies that are linked to a coherent assessment, planning and teaching. Learning for some students is hindered by the lack of individualised activities and few specific and measurable learning goals. The co-ordination of literacy and numeracy provision is poor, with little short-term planning or tracking.
Creative arts	Outstanding: The programme is well designed and standards achieved by students are very high. The quality of teaching is excellent, and very good use is made of sensory and experiential learning activities. Specialist aids to support communication, including Makaton, are used well to promote learning. Well-qualified staff work collaboratively to meet the additional needs of students, but planning documentation lacks detail.
Social and life skills	Good: Teaching is good and staff collaborate to provide valuable learning opportunities for students. Good use of specialist aids supports the positive development of communication skills and encourages students to make their own choices and decisions. Staff

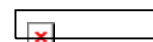
	use varied teaching methods to facilitate and promote good learning. There is insufficient emphasis on the setting of individual learning goals in lessons and inconsistent management of support staff.
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How well is the college led and managed?



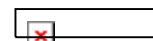
Leadership and management are good. Students make significant progress in achieving their primary learning goals. Much very good and outstanding teaching facilitates individual success and good decision making by students. The focus on quality assurance is inconsistent. The self-assessment process is not rigorous, nor does it pay sufficient regard to the criteria in the common inspection framework. Some teaching makes insufficient demands on the students. The development of students' individual learning programmes is conscientiously managed. Good progress has been made towards integrating students' key educational targets with those for personal development. The college's equal opportunities policy provides the framework for a positive college culture and ethos. Governors are insufficiently involved in setting the strategic direction of the college and monitoring the quality of outcomes. Financial management systems are good. The college provides good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. It has achieved particular success in meeting the needs of students with significant learning and communication difficulties through well-planned teaching and good residential experience. Whilst students' needs have become increasingly more complex since the last inspection, the college has identified these trends appropriately and is developing provision to ensure that all students have easy access to learning. The college is developing a satisfactory approach to the development of students' literacy, communication and numeracy skills through integrated project activities. Contact with the local community provides a realistic context for learning. Opportunities for students to participate in external work placements are very good. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is steadily increasing and is currently 13% of the student population. Issues relating to cultural diversity are well addressed. Staff with physical disabilities provide good role models for students. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Senior managers and governors have been slow to respond to their responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA). Staff training in relation to both acts is in a very early stage of development. Access for people with restricted mobility is good.

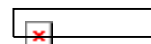
How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance for students are outstanding in both the college and residences. Individual learning programmes are effectively designed to promote maximum independence and confidence. Students participate in rigorous assessment to identify individual learning needs and levels of support to ensure a smooth transition into college life. Personal support is outstanding. Induction is very good. Each student has a key worker and a personal tutor who meet regularly with the student

underpins individual learning programmes. The use of the hydrotherapy pool and development of a range of specialist aids to support communication has improved students' confidence, independence and learning. A minority of students do not receive sufficient speech and language therapy support. Students have very good access to a range of outreach specialist services. The transition process is very well managed. A recently appointed transition co-ordinator provides expert liaison with parents, key workers, social services and the local specialist Connexions adviser to support and facilitate a smooth transition from college to the next stage of the students' life.

Students' views of the college



Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below:

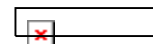
What students like about the college

- everything
- helpful, caring staff
- making friends
- most teaching sessions
- going out.

What they feel could be improved

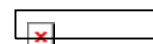
- nothing
- having to leave at the end of their course
- weekends.

Other information

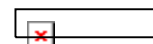


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once it is published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC is responsible for ensuring that the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) receives the college's post-inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

Part B: The college as a whole



Achievement and standards



1. There is no difference between the performance of students aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19 plus. Students' achievements are good overall; they are effectively recorded and celebrated with students. Where appropriate, students are able to achieve external accreditation, such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) 'Towards Independence and Workright' and modules from the national Open College Network (OCN). Pass rates on the courses leading to these awards are good. Only when a goal is achieved is it matched with national awards. Over the period of 2000 to 2002, approximately 50% of students entering the college had communication difficulties. All progressed well in developing skills and using a range of communication aids.

2. The majority of students make at least the progress expected of them during their time at college and many exceed initial expectations. Students' confidence increases significantly with parallel skill development in communication. Standards are monitored across the extended curriculum, but the recognition of students' achievement is not always consistent across all programme areas.

3. During the past three years, the majority of students have achieved their primary learning goal. The introduction of the hydrotherapy pool has significantly improved students' learning. The Halliwick ten-point programme is used to develop personal independence in the water, increasing confidence and developing gross and fine motor skills. One student was observed successfully achieving his Red Badge proficiency award during the inspection. Students are actively involved in setting and monitoring their own progress. Individual learning goals are identified and monitored within each curriculum area, but small steps of learning are not consistently identified for all students. On occasions, the lack of specific learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy, and occasionally in personal and social skills, hinders the recognition of achievement.

4. Students make significant gains in confidence and self-esteem. Realistic opportunities are created to enable students to express preferences and make choices, such as those provided by the student council and the Shaftesbury Society 'listening exercise'. All students are encouraged to express their views and, if problems arise, to suggest improvement.

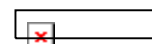
5. When possible, students' progression routes are clearly planned. There is good preparation for work placements and a good range of external work-experience opportunities is provided. The

monitoring of student destinations is satisfactory. Over the past two years, the majority of students continued their learning in further or adult education after leaving college.

6. Destination data from 2002 demonstrate that 20% of leavers moved on to supported living, whilst another 53% progressed to residential settings. Some 27% of students returned to the family home, many as a result of difficulties in securing independent accommodation. Of the ten leavers for 2003, six are expected to attend further or adult education classes. Two will attend full-time day service provision and two will go into sheltered part-time employment.

7. Students respond effectively in social situations, learn skills in taking turns and show a basic awareness of health and safety issues. Students develop relevant skills for their future life and effectively interact with community services and local amenities. Students' attendance and punctuality are good and in line with those of students in other specialist residential colleges.

Quality of teaching, training and learning



8. Teaching is good: 88% of lessons were at least satisfactory, and 71% were good or better. A further ten sessions, which include tutorials, staff and student briefing, extra curricular and residential activities, contribute to the judgments relating to the quality of teaching and learning. Much teaching in creative arts is outstanding: the majority of teaching was good or better. Teachers and trainers know their subjects well and successfully share their knowledge with the students. Throughout the inspection, the management of the behaviour of students, especially of those students with the highest level of need, was skilful. College guidance on managing behaviour gives staff good support. Where teaching works well, staff employ a patient, observant approach and use a wide range of strategies to encourage all students to communicate. For example, staff were observed giving students deliberately mistaken directions in order to elicit an appropriate response and to monitor their progress in learning. Students are given sufficient time, personal space and accorded the dignity to develop the confidence to make their own decisions and to participate in lessons or conversation. There is very good use of sensory and experiential learning activities in creative arts lessons.

9. Staff have a good understanding of the impact of disability on learning and use this knowledge to plan lessons that meet the needs of students. The project-based approach to the curriculum is used to provide vehicles for reinforcing communication in realistic contexts using the community and local amenities. In most areas, students benefit from this approach and, in the best lessons, well-planned teaching links individual aims with project content. However, in literacy and numeracy, and in some lessons in personal and social skills, there is inadequate planning. Teaching does not always meet the needs of all students or identify specific short-term measurable objectives. In creative arts, activities are individually designed for all students. Teaching takes place effectively within all sessions, although it is not consistently recorded in lesson plans.

10. Students are successfully helped to achieve their long-term goals. In the less effective lessons, descriptive recording mechanisms hinder the monitoring of small steps of students' progress. Individual learning plans are comprehensive, well informed by initial assessment and are reviewed and updated regularly with the student and their personal tutor and key worker. There are strong and positive relationships between staff and students. Students enjoy their work, are proud of their achievements and respond well to staff. Teaching methods promote issues relating to cultural diversity and equality of opportunity. Staff with physical disabilities provide positive role models for students.

11. Most members of the teaching and learning support staff are appropriately well qualified and experienced. Many have a first degree and additional specialist qualifications. There are adequate numbers of staff to support students through the extended curriculum. The college has a good staff development programme which provides comprehensive training. In addition, staff have access to

training linked to the learning and development needs of the students; for example improving communication through the use of Makaton and the effective management of specialist aids to support communication. However, not all staff have been trained to a consistent standard in the use of specialist aids to support communication or the teaching of literacy and numeracy. All new staff undertake an induction programme and each new person has an assigned mentor who supports them through their probationary period. A comprehensive appraisal process is in place for most staff.

12. Facilities for teaching and learning are good. Resources are managed efficiently with a structured programme of planned improvements. The college recognises that a small proportion of residential and teaching accommodation is unsatisfactory. To address this, the college plans to provide a new demountable classroom during the summer 2003 and a new accommodation block from September 2004. Information and communication technology (ICT) resources do not meet the learning needs of all students. Many computers are old and slow, and hinder access and concentration. The college is developing an ICT strategy to update its computer stock and improve Internet access. Health and safety procedures are robust. Clear reporting structures are followed by staff and managed well, for example fire escapes were recently coated with a non-slip surface to ensure safety in wet weather.

13. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. Before students are given a place at the college there is a comprehensive pre-entry assessment. Good baseline assessments provide a realistic starting point for students new to the college. As the students progress through their programme, comprehensive multi-disciplinary assessment forms a sound basis for the developing independent learning plan. Primary learning goals are translated into clear long-term aims through discussion between care staff and teaching staff. Short-term objectives are then set, in discussion between key workers, personal tutors and the student. The college-designed database provides good opportunities for tracking students' progress and recording both internal accreditation and external national award criteria. Comprehensive formal reviews of students' progress are used successfully to inform future planning. There is some inconsistency in the use of systems to exchange information about students' progress. In the area of literacy and numeracy, the formal identification of short-term learning goals is insufficient and, as a consequence, some teaching lacks challenge. Those who have a legitimate interest are well informed of the progress students are making.

14. The curriculum is well matched to the needs and interests of students. Each student has an effective individual learning programme with a primary learning goal which is informed by pre-entry and initial assessment. The range of students' learning abilities and their complex physical and communication difficulties has resulted in significant changes to the curriculum framework over the last few years. Most subjects are no longer taught in a subject specific manner, but are developed and reinforced through activity projects. Learning and the development of literacy, communication and numeracy skills, where appropriate, are placed in context and integrated through this approach, although the co-ordination of these areas is underdeveloped.

15. A wide range of enrichment activities provides opportunities for the reinforcement and practice of relevant skills and self-advocacy. These include social activities such as karaoke, bowling, football and attending concerts, and involvement in community events such as helping at the local carnival, involvement in church communities or attending Venture Scouts. The curriculum is socially inclusive and provides suitable routes allowing students to make progress. Students develop their skills through appropriate work experience, either through the mini enterprise activities organised by the college or through external work placements provided by a local sheltered placement scheme. At Christmas, students on the world of work programme sell goods including Christmas and greetings cards made by students in the college at a local market. The college provides many opportunities to celebrate students' achievements, for example formally through an annual celebration, and informally in numerous ways throughout the year. Students take a pride in their work which is displayed throughout the college campus. Feedback from parents and carers expresses very strong satisfaction with the work of the college. Students are effectively prepared for transition into life in the community.

16. Support and guidance for students are outstanding. The Christian ethos of the college and the value placed on every individual underpins the life of the whole college community. A range of easily

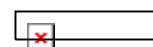
accessible policies and procedures are in place to support students and ensure their protection. Students are encouraged to make choices and to express themselves assertively. For example, one student was preparing for baptism. He was very clear about which clothes he wanted to buy and what colours he preferred. Pre-entry and initial assessment identifies levels of individual support to ensure a smooth transition into college life.

17. Personal support for students is provided through the key worker and personal tutor. Key workers provide a clear bridge between education and care, and ensure that the needs and interests of the student are paramount. Care plans are used to record all relevant information about individual students. These include the individual learning plan, as well as medical, family, educational and social information. Care plans are continually updated and provide a very detailed profile of each student. There are weekly opportunities for students to meet jointly with their key worker and personal tutor. Formal meetings to review progress against individual targets take place every half term. The student is an equal partner in these tripartite meetings. The tutorial processes are very good. Tutorials are held weekly and staff respond promptly to any issues identified by students. Very good speech and language support, and physiotherapy underpin individual learning programmes. The continued development and use of a range of specialist aids to support communication has increased learning confidence and independence. However, a minority of students receive insufficient speech and language support due to the numbers of students using the service and the current resources available.

18. Procedures for recognising issues relating to attendance and punctuality are well established. Induction processes are rigorous and all aspects of transition are successfully managed. A very good leavers' programme begins in the second year of the three-year programme to ensure that students are sufficiently well prepared and able to move on confidently. The college has recently appointed a transition co-ordinator to liaise with parents, key workers, Connexions and other related agencies to facilitate a smooth transition from college to the next stage of the students' life. The co-ordinator works with the local Connexions adviser who is a specialist adviser for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

19. Students indicate that they feel valued and well consulted and welcome the outstanding individual support they receive from staff. The recent Shaftesbury Society 'listening exercise' was successful in gathering the views of service users from across the organisation. Students have very good access to a range of outreach specialist services through the Bedfordshire Sensory Impairment Service. Services available include drama therapy, podiatry, psychiatry and a dietician. In addition, staff from the outreach team have provided specialist training sessions for college staff.

Leadership and management



20. Leadership and management are good. The aims and mission of the college are well understood and are shared by staff at all levels. There are outstanding features to the work of the college, such as the detailed management information systems and the staff evaluation of curricular provision. There have been significant changes to the way the college operates since the last inspection, such as the project-based approach to the curricular areas. These changes have been a direct response to areas for development identified at that time. There is insufficient focus on quality assurance systems and the quality of provision is not always consistent. Some teaching makes insufficient demands on students.

21. Staff overall are self-critical and have worked hard to ensure that changes they have recommended to the organisation of the college are an outcome of the education team review. The college development plan sets out to address many of the issues that face the college. However, the plan is based on a self-assessment process that is insufficiently rigorous and pays insufficient regard to the criteria in the common inspection framework.

22. Systems for management and communication within the college often rely on trust and regular informal conversations. Many staff speak with warmth and enthusiasm about their work at the college and the support they receive. Whilst this works well for many staff, some, for instance those whose contracts are less regular, are left out and sometimes miss vital information. Curriculum and course leaders are very aware of the development needs of the college and the impact of the recent curriculum changes on the organisation. In creative arts, the management of the curriculum is very effective in improving the achievements of students. In social and life skills, the emphasis on a project-based approach to the curriculum does not have a sufficiently positive impact on students.

23. The development of students' individual learning programmes is conscientiously managed with good progress made towards integrating key educational targets with those for personal development. The assessment and achievement data held on the management information system provide detailed and thorough signposts to both internal and external accreditation. The distinctive nature of the provision of care for students is very well managed and enhances the overall learning of students. There are clear procedures and systems for areas such as risk assessment and the resolution of complaints from students, parents and staff.

24. The college's equal opportunities policy provides the framework for a positive college culture and ethos, but it has not been upgraded to include reference to the SENDA and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. Senior managers and governors have been slow to react to their duties in this area. Professional development for staff covers many aspects of learning difficulties and disability. The college has a strong tradition of staff training and development. New staff are well supported and take part in a satisfactory induction programme. Appraisal and supervision are welcomed by staff and often have a positive impact on performance and promote improvement. However, not all staff have been through this process and for some the criteria employed have been insufficiently rigorous. The principal has not been recently or regularly appraised. The college does not have a comprehensive framework for the identification and sharing of good practice.

25. Governors take an active interest in the college and provide conscientious support. They place considerable reliance on trust and goodwill to carry out their duties. There are active links with the Shaftesbury Society. Governors are insufficiently involved in setting the strategic direction of the college and monitoring its progress towards achieving learning outcomes for students. The college is not held sufficiently accountable for ensuring that effective quality assurance systems are in place.

26. Financial management systems are good. The business plan is costed and local income and expenditure are monitored effectively. The good quality provision for students and the high standards of achievement are well managed and provide good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

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Literacy and numeracy

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Overall provision in this area is **Satisfactory (Grade 3)**

Strengths

- good opportunities for the integration of development and practice of communication skills

- effective links between assessment, planning and teaching
- good use of learning resources.

Weaknesses

- insufficiently specific measurable learning goals
- inappropriate attention to individual needs
- inadequate co-ordination of literacy and numeracy within the curriculum.

Scope of provision

27. Literacy, communication and numeracy are taught as part of a curriculum framework using a project-based approach using appropriate topics and local amenities. This approach incorporates, living skills, creative arts, self-awareness, therapy and care, and the world of work. The overall emphasis is on communication which is supported, recorded and monitored across the extended curriculum; literacy and numeracy are included where they are deemed appropriate.

Achievement and standards

28. Records and observations indicate that students' confidence increases significantly with the parallel development of skills in communication. Students demonstrate enthusiasm and enjoyment in their sessions, but for some students the level of achievement does not match their ability, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Individual learning goals are identified and monitored within each curriculum area and detailed systems for recording achievements operate to provide evidence of progress. Students may attain accreditation through the national OCN. Staff map students' achievements to a comprehensive list of criteria for the award. All students gained at least one credit last year. The broad primary learning goals are achieved for the majority of students. However, the lack of specific learning outcomes hinders recognition of achievement benchmarked against the literacy and numeracy core curriculum frameworks at pre-entry and entry levels.

Quality of education and training

29. Experienced staff are highly effective in using relevant and varied communication strategies to facilitate learning and secure achievement. One lively lesson, based on a project to visit London, provided an environment where an extensive range of specialist aids were used to promote communication. Students with significant communication difficulties took part in effective group discussions using Makaton, specialist aids, gesture, amplified sound and speech. Planning is linked closely to the initial assessment, but formative assessment is inadequate in supporting progressive learning and challenging students. The project-based approach is used effectively to provide a means for reinforcing communication in realistic situations using the community and local amenities.

In a world of work lesson, the teacher used well-prepared materials and structured open questions to encourage students to think carefully about their responses. Students successfully practised communication skills and individualised tasks enabling the entire group to contribute to the class activity. Students benefit from a project-based approach, though short-term goals are not clearly and consistently identified. This makes it difficult for individuals to acknowledge their learning or ways in which they could improve. During a leisure lesson for students with complex needs, the teacher did not identify personal goals for each student and social interaction between members of the group was minimal.

30. Teaching is not consistently individualised to meet the needs of all students. There is a very wide range of ability among students in the living skills groups and, on occasions, these factors hinder students' progress. For example, in one lesson, some students did not appear to understand the previously prepared questions and there was no use of symbols, whilst a more able student was insufficiently involved in the lesson.

31. The college has well-qualified and experienced staff and the communication aids available for students are good. Accommodation for teaching literacy, communication and numeracy is appropriate, though resources for literacy are limited and some support staff are ineffective in supporting learners. Training in the use of Makaton has been offered and taken by most of the staff. Staff have worked hard to devise a vocabulary of 50 signs covering the needs of most students in the college. This is generally used well, but some support workers are not yet able to support Makaton users in the classes to which they have been assigned. Some members of staff are insufficiently trained in the teaching of numeracy and literacy or in the use of the national curriculum framework: access for all.

32. Assessment systems are sufficiently developed and organised to record individual achievement against personal goals. Assessment is used in termly review. On-going discussion between the key worker and the personal tutor supports the recording of general progress. There is insufficient attempt to involve students in the evaluation of their own performance or of setting further goals from week to week. It is difficult to judge clearly the progress and further needs of students. The learning of students is not always carefully analysed and recorded.

33. Courses offered to students match their needs and support progression towards independence. For a minority of students, the level of their work and activities does not challenge and develop their ability. All individual programmes are linked closely with the primary learning goals. The three programmes offer activities and approaches that match the ability range and aspirations of the college population. The narrow range of accreditation limits the possibility of achievement for a minority of students. For some students, opportunities to develop further their literacy and numeracy skills are limited. Good use is made of the locality to develop communication and numeracy skills and to use local amenities. For example, all students are supported in managing their own finances and using the post office to withdraw their money. Some students progress to independent living in flats and others are encouraged to extend their choices and experiences. Enrichment activities offer further extensions, particularly to the development and reinforcement of communication skills.

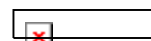
34. Individual needs are identified effectively and supported in relation to care needs, personal and social skills and communication, although they are undeveloped for literacy and numeracy. Support for education, communication and personal development is provided in most classes and in the extended curriculum. Students are encouraged to make choices and the effects of these decisions are discussed and evaluated. Students' records indicate a high degree of care is taken to ensure that each student understands the options available on leaving the college. Each student is helped to make an informed choice, which may be changed after the initial decision is made. For one young woman, this process involved the decision about living at home or in supported accommodation in the locality of her parents. This involved some discussion and several changes of mind before she was happy with her final decision.

Leadership and management

35. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Curriculum and course leaders are well aware of the needs of the area, particularly in communication, and have a clear vision of what needs to be

provided. The education team review is accurate, specific and detailed, but there is insufficient focus on systems to consistently monitor the quality of the provision. There is awareness that, in some instances, the new curriculum development has reduced effectiveness in teaching literacy, communication and numeracy skills. The co-ordination of literacy, numeracy and communication across the curriculum areas is underdeveloped. This leads to non-specific target setting which limits students' progress. Course leaders work well with their teams in designing programmes which are relevant and useful to the students. There is currently no formal policy which guides and informs communication, literacy or numeracy, although the college has begun to develop one. This lack of guidance has reduced the coherence of the provision across the extended curriculum. Senior managers are aware of many of the issues relating to the changes in the ways students are grouped. The supervision and appraisal of teaching and care staff are good: they support and encourage staff who are well informed and well prepared for meeting the students' complex needs. The provision of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Creative arts



Overall provision in this area is **outstanding (Grade 1)**

Strengths

- excellent teaching
- effective use of specialist aids to support communication and Makaton to promote learning
- needs of individual students met effectively within sessions
- very good levels of attainment for most learners
- very good use of sensory and experiential learning activities.

Weaknesses

- imprecise planning documentation for teaching.

Scope of provision

36. The college offers a broad creative arts programme. Multicraft activities, music, textiles, ceramics and drama provide all learners with opportunities for exploring self-expression and extending

communication skills and other essential skills within different settings and through different learning media. Pre-vocational and vocational programmes, such as the world of work, promote the acquisition of personal skills through a vocational medium and also allow some students, when appropriate, to participate in work experience in the local community.

Achievement and standards

37. Students achieve high standards. Achievements in creative arts are very good and students are successful in developing confidence, personal skills and increased communication skills over time. Most students make significant progress towards long-term aims and primary learning goals. Achievements are effectively celebrated throughout the programme with other students, staff and when appropriate, with parents/carers and the local community. Pre-vocational and vocational elements of the curriculum combine the very good attainment of learning goals related to the workplace with ASDAN Workright Awards. Effective external work-experience placements provide valuable practice in real work. These placements are frequently linked to the final employment preferences for students.

Quality of education and training

38. Teaching in the creative arts programme is outstanding. A very high proportion of teaching is good or better. Teaching staff demonstrate expertise in their subject areas. They have a detailed knowledge and meet effectively the learning needs of individual students within all lessons. Specialist communication aids and Makaton are used successfully to promote learning. In a ceramics lesson, the teaching was outstanding. Students with severe and complex disabilities were helped to produce high quality bisque-ware ready for glazing. The activity, based on student choice and direction, was also linked to a themed drama project on the musical *Lion King*. In addition to selecting colours, students were learning about a range of skills such as making choices, self-expression and taking turns. The teacher was successfully assisted by both learning and specialist support workers to provide a fully inclusive learning approach. This led to high standards for the students. Many students within the creative arts sessions obtain other therapeutic benefits from the activities. For example, students using wheelchairs in drama applied physiotherapy movements to choreographed routines. Similarly, the physiological benefits of a demanding task in textiles, pushing a large needle through a canvas held in a special frame, necessitated fine motor skills and considerable effort. This particular task provided additional value for a student with severe physical disabilities.

39. Very good use is made of sensory and experiential learning activities. In a lesson based on the musical *Cats*, students were able to practise a short piece several times using percussion instruments of their own choice. In a drama lesson, also linked to *Cats*, students were accompanying a pre-recorded soundtrack; they were able to recognise their improvement through recording the performance and then discussing further progress. Some students were being assisted to develop simple problem solving skills. Members of the group were making good progress in both lessons and this was recorded in drama diaries and videos. Students are encouraged to use their experiences to measure their own progress and this clearly adds to their sense of achievement. Video recording of drama sessions improves self-perception and body awareness, and also provides further celebration of success.

40. The staff to student ratio in all sessions is very good. There is a strong rapport between teachers and students, an adult approach and effective use of a range of teaching styles. The quality of some lesson planning documentation is inconsistent; some lesson plans lack details on how activities should take account of the individual needs of students. In others, there is insufficient variety in the setting of session activities and objectives to challenge the more able students.

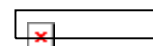
41. The weekly three-way process of programme review involving the student, the key worker and the personal tutor is very effective. In one tutorial, in addition to the programme review, the third-year student and key worker had previously visited the student's post-college residential provision. During the tutorial with the personal tutor, the student discussed the choosing of a colour scheme for the new accommodation. In another session, the use of humour added to the student's enjoyment and learning. The student was producing sound arguments related to the speed of a new powered

electric wheelchair. The key worker and personal tutor were helping the student to set a new goal about how fast he would be able to travel. The recently established post of transition co-ordinator provides a most supportive and coherent service for all leavers. Similarly, the local Connexions advisor collaborates effectively with the college.

Leadership and management

42. Leadership and management are very good. The management of creative arts has a collegiate approach and each subject area is able to operate both independently and in collaboration with other areas. For example, Christmas cards are designed during multicraft sessions and are sold by students on pre-vocational and vocational programmes. The quality of the provision is effectively monitored. Effective use is made of resources and there is good teamwork among all levels of staff. The staff review of the area is accurate. Equality of opportunity is promoted and evident in the activities undertaken by the students. Staff are well qualified and have the opportunity for further specialist qualifications. Students and staff are proud of the college and have a strong commitment to improvement.

Social and life skills



Overall provision in this area is **Good (Grade 2)**

Strengths

- good use of specialist aids for communication
- significant opportunities for students to make choices
- effective and realistic range of practical activities.

Weaknesses

- insufficient formal identification of individual learning goals
- inconsistent management and use of support staff.

Scope of provision

43. All students are involved in the personal and social skills programme which entails self-awareness, personal effectiveness and essential skills. Activities include project work in kitchens, bedrooms and in community settings such as supermarkets, cafes and the local post office. Self-

care programmes are undertaken with key workers. Students follow the personal relationship module 'getting together' if they are assessed to have the personal, emotional and social skills to equip them to deal with the issues raised. Personal grooming and decision making are covered in the 'making the most of yourself' module. The national OCN 'pathways to progression' offers accreditation for personal and social skills.

Achievement and standards

44. Students' progress and achievements are good. The programmes encourage students to apply their skills effectively in a range of real situations. They gain in confidence and develop personal, communication and social skills that will be of use in their future lives. Students respond positively to the encouragement they receive, especially when they are successful in the use of specialist aids to support communication. During a visit to a local supermarket, students were able to make good and appropriate social interactions with the checkout cashier. Students are aware of basic health and safety. In a lesson in which students were preparing a picnic lunch, a member of the student group drew attention to the dangers of using a sharp knife. The college database is successfully used for tracking students' achievement. Only when a goal is achieved is it matched with national awards. National OCN accreditation is successfully used as an outcome for students' achievements. The careful recording of objectives, via the college database, ensures that external accreditation does not lead the curriculum. However, recording of individual learning outcomes is not consistent for all students. Systems to identify, monitor and track individual learning achievements over short time periods are limited. Small incremental steps of learning are not always effectively established and so for some students it is difficult to measure achievement and attainment. Students develop greater self-sufficiency, some move into more independent living accommodation as their abilities and self-confidence increase. Students state that they are happy at the college and enjoy learning. They attend lessons regularly and are punctual.

Quality of education and training

45. Most of the teaching is good or better. Good use is made of practical activities in the residential accommodation and in the local community. In the good lessons, teachers understand the individual needs of students and work effectively with support staff to ensure that all students are engaged in the planned activity. Students are encouraged to make realistic choices and to express preferences. During a group tutorial with the personal tutor and key workers, students were learning to anticipate events and to make choices about which leisure activities they wanted to participate in later in the week. Staff politely asked a group of students if they were willing to allow an inspector to attend the student council and honoured their wishes. These choices are respected by teachers and support staff. During a visit to a local supermarket, students had shopping lists appropriate to their level of understanding. Individual students were then required to work with the teacher or support staff to locate the correct items. One student made an inappropriate choice. This choice was sensitively compared with the correct item and a successful purchase was made.

46. In the more successful lessons, creative strategies and innovative use of teaching materials by teachers meet students' individual needs. Teachers and support staff are proficient in the use of Makaton and electronic communicators, and use this knowledge well to facilitate students' learning opportunities. This expertise promotes good communication and gives students the confidence to use a range of communication strategies outside formal taught lessons. In a living skills session, staff successfully used Makaton signing to enable students to identify the main concepts of the washing and drying of personal clothing through the use of icons. Students were actively encouraged to use speech or specialist communication aids to join in the activity. In some lessons, insufficient use is made of support staff. For example, during a lesson on the importance of room management, two support staff were passive during a demonstration of bed making even though there were two beds in the room, six students and sufficient space for two demonstrations. Another lesson to identify symbols and shop items was also not successful. The teacher was working alone with two students with severe and complex needs, and the learning objectives for each student were not achieved.

47. Teachers know the students well and are aware of the specific needs of individual students. In the more effective lessons, this knowledge is used to good advantage. Activities are successfully

individualised according to students' ability, but this is not always translated into lesson plans. Staff have a good rapport with students and make effective use of a range of teaching styles. In an independent living skills lesson, students were learning to differentiate between chopping boards for raw and cooked meats in addition to taking turns, listening and concentrating on the current task.

Leadership and management

48. Leadership and management at an operational level are effective and the provision is successfully planned by individual teachers. There is supportive teamwork and regular collaboration, although no teacher has specific day-to-day responsibility for the cohesion and co-ordination of the personal and social skills curriculum. This is reflected in the education team review where the feedback from staff on the evaluation of the personal and social curriculum points out an inconsistency of approach in project-led teaching. The self-assessment report is not rigorous, although the education team review is comprehensive and analytical, and identifies measures for improvement. All staff are effectively involved in teaching social and life skills, whatever the nature of their involvement with students. These roles are understood by all staff and are mainly well managed. Management and deployment of the learning support staff are not always consistent and occasionally lead to poorer learning outcomes for some students. Staff have good access to a relevant and comprehensive training programme. Issues relating to cultural diversity and equal opportunities are well promoted. Teachers and staff express a strong commitment to the college and to the effective learning of the students.