



Derwen College

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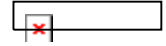
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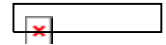
Basic information about the college



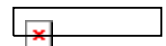
Name of college:	Derwen College
Type of college:	Independent residential specialist
Principal:	David Kendall
Address of college:	Oswestry Shropshire SY11 3JA
Telephone number:	01691 661234
Fax number:	01691 670714
Chair of governors:	Mrs Paddy Hughes
Reference number*:	208745
Name of reporting inspector:	Christine Steadman
Date of inspection:	12-16 May 2003

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

Part A: Summary

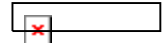


Information about the college



Derwen College is an independent, specialist college that provides residential further education and independence training for young people aged from 16 to 25 years who have complex and severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many students require care and medical support. Founded in 1927, as a charitable trust, the college is set in 50 acres of parkland near the Shropshire market town of Oswestry on the Welsh border. The Derwen Trust also manages Derwen Enterprises, a vocational programme for students aged 24 plus who require further training before moving into the wider community. These consist of former students from the college, other specialist colleges and mainstream provision. All trainees in Derwen Enterprises are funded wholly by social services. All members of the governing body of the college are Derwen trustees. Students attend the college from all parts of England and Wales, and there are currently 189 residential students funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) from 27 of the local LSCs in England and include 36 students funded through Education and Learning Wales (ELWa). Of the 189 students, 106 are male and 83 are female. The college has a recruitment policy that encourages students from a wide range of backgrounds, which has resulted in an increasing proportion of students from ethnic backgrounds. Some 10% of students are from a minority ethnic background.

How effective is the college?



The college has made good progress since the last inspection, addressing many of the issues identified for further attention. Achievement over time is very good for the majority of students. The college provides satisfactory teaching overall, with some very good or outstanding provision. Provision is primarily focused on practical activities in realistic settings. There is effective promotion of independent living skills within the positive and welcoming atmosphere of the college. Provision in literacy and numeracy, and pre-vocational and vocational programmes are satisfactory, and is good in independent living skills. Residential provision is good with very good support for students.

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

Key strengths

- effective leadership of a diverse population
- good achievement by students
- good procedures for transition
- high quality accommodation
- wide range of high quality sports, leisure and vocational facilities
- good professional development programmes for staff
- very good range of specialist staff
- very broad range of programmes for students
- very good support for students

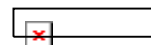
- good response to social inclusion.

What should be improved

- lack of challenge in teaching
- adverse impact of the timetable arrangements on teaching
- inconsistent planning for individual needs
- underdeveloped library and resource provision
- co-ordination of assessment procedures
- management and staffing structures.

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, numeracy communication and key skills	Satisfactory. Teaching is effective; it uses realistic contexts for learning. Students are committed to their own learning and many are making significant progress. Standards of work are satisfactory or good on most courses. Speech and language support is very good. Planning for individual need is inconsistent, and the quality of teaching

	and learning is insufficiently monitored. The organisation of literacy, numeracy, communication and key skills lacks clarity, and there are insufficient opportunities for students to develop and reinforce their knowledge and skills.
Pre-vocational and vocational subjects	Satisfactory. Exemplary teaching in catering and good teaching through practical activities. Some teaching did not take sufficient account of individual needs. A very good range of realistic working environments and supported in-house work placements, but very limited opportunities for external work experience. Very good use of communication aids in vocational areas. Ineffective planning of students' timetables and insufficient allocation of time for staff to prepare sessions.
Independent living skills	Good. Independence is very effectively promoted through provision in realistic environments. Overall, the achievement of students is good. Students make good progress towards their individual goals. Insufficient planning for individual learning objectives limits achievement for some students. The integration of literacy, numeracy and key skills is undeveloped and hinders students' progress.

How well is the college led and managed?

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Support and guidance for students are very good. Students develop in self-confidence, independence and maturity. They very much appreciate the personal care and support provided. Access to a very good range and quality of information and advice both before and during their time at the college enables students to choose suitable programmes, settle quickly into college life and to make informed decisions as they progress through the college. The assessment of students' individual learning, support, medical and care needs is very good. Students receive effective additional support in all areas of college life. The college makes very good specialist provision for students. Students receive good personal support from counsellors, tutors, residential care staff and specialist support staff. Members of staff form very good relationships with students and ensure that all students have equal opportunities to participate fully in college life. Careers guidance and links with Connexions are good, but resources and independent access to materials relating to work are unsatisfactory. The external work experience programme for students is underdeveloped.

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

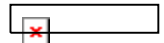
- the many friends they make
- the support and respect they receive from tutors
- the trips into town, at weekends and in their free time
- becoming more independent
- the high expectations set by staff
- the stress free environment
- being part of staff recruitment interviews
- the adult atmosphere
- learning to stick up for themselves
- the range of vocational programmes.

What they feel could be improved

- the length of the college day

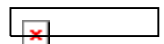
- the menu in the dining room
- restrictions on going out independently in the first year
- the lack of a snooker table in Thomas House
- the lack of locks on students' rooms
- many said nothing could be improved.

Other information

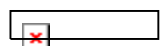


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring 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. Achievement for students over time is good, with the majority gaining success against appropriately challenging long-term targets. Many students achieve long-term targets in gaining independence skills and voluntary work or employment on completion of their course. For example, one student from the office skills department overcame many personal problems and achieved a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 1 in administration whilst at the college and is now living independently attending a local further education college studying a level 2 course in

leaving. A significant number of students are now moving into supported residential provision in the locality rather than returning home and many now take up either voluntary work or employment rather than returning home unemployed. Analysis of trends in achievement and attainment is underdeveloped and does not properly inform the development and planning of courses. Evaluation is based on generalised information gathered through the process of managing the college. Through this analysis, the college identified a number of students moving into retail employment and subsequently designed a retail vocational programme to develop skills and enhance employment opportunities for students.

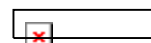
2. Departments are beginning to monitor trends over time and the college has comparative data for accredited courses over three years. Over the last three years, students have attained a range of accreditation across several curriculum areas throughout their time at the college. Many of the qualifications are related to workplace standards and give students the opportunity to transfer skills acquired through the completion of accredited courses. For example, students in hospitality and catering gain food handling hygiene certificates which allow them to work in the college restaurant, dining room and coffee shop, preparing and serving food for the students, trainees, staff and the public. Standards of attainment in many of the vocational areas equip students with knowledge and skills that are transferable into employment on leaving the college. The Derwen Estates programme gives students opportunities to understand aspects of arboriculture and forest management with appropriate accreditation. Additionally, the Team Enterprise programme has successfully trained students to create and market their own products. In the last two years, the teams have been awarded the Young Enterprise Awards for the best team in Shropshire and short listed for the best team in the West Midlands area. The development of independent living skills is good. Students are appropriately placed in supported residential provision. Once independent living skills have been developed to include aspects of self care, medication, catering and budgeting, students progress to semi-independence and independent residency as appropriate.

3. A very exciting and uplifting celebration awards assembly is held every term, where individual students' achievement is acknowledged and celebrated. This is a very effective way of increasing self-esteem and sharing the achievement of peers and students in other social groups. During the ceremony attended by inspectors, students' achievements across all areas of the curriculum were celebrated, including external sports awards, completion of full and individual units of NVQ level 1, National Proficiency Test Council (NPTC) awards for textiles and hospitality, and housekeeping, and in-house certification for achievement in personal goals and learning objectives.

4. Retention is satisfactory at 96% when compared with other residential specialist provision. Analysis of trends over time indicate these figures to be influenced by deteriorating medical conditions of students requiring full-time nursing care or student death. The college accurately identified issues of inaccurate pre-entry reporting that adversely affected retention for a small number of students. Following a review of procedures, the retention rates have now improved.

5. Attendance is good overall. The college has begun to analyse trends and patterns over the last year, but there are some inconsistencies in the collation and reporting of data. Punctuality is generally good and is monitored by teaching staff very closely. The response to a student not turning up to a session is well co-ordinated by the medical staff with personal tutors monitoring and responding to issues as they arise.

Quality of teaching, training and learning



6. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 90% of sessions, with 46% good or better and 10% unsatisfactory. Where teaching is good, the teachers and trainers have high levels of expertise and knowledge within their own subject and share an enthusiasm and love for the activity with their students. They plan sessions well and ensure that individual need is well addressed in each activity.

achievement of learning goals and objectives are rigorously collated on the intranet. For example, one student has his learning goals built around communication skills and peer relationships. Through developing an interest in information technology this student is now motivated to come to sessions and has performed in the summer fashion show.

7. Staff generally know their students well and are able to anticipate their needs and help them to remain on task for long periods of time. However, in the less effective sessions, students are bored and do not engage fully in the lesson. In vocational areas, students often leave early and arrive late from attending sports and leisure sessions. This has a negative impact on learning for these students with most not fully involved in activities. This is unsatisfactory. Some sessions do not have enough support staff to meet individual students' needs and teachers are often unable to work individually with all students. A few staff, despite their qualifications, do not understand the methodology for teaching students with learning difficulties and sometimes use language and vocabulary that is too advanced for the individual student. Some lessons do not challenge students individually, despite the high aspirations clearly communicated in interactions with students. For example, students are sometimes set very mundane housekeeping tasks for over a third of their weekly programme.

8. There are good and positive working relationships with most students. Where relationships are less effective, the teacher has not fully understood the needs of the student and has been frustrated by their response or, in a minority of cases, was unaware of the students' lack of involvement. For example, in one of the practical activities, a student was using a potentially hazardous piece of equipment and the teacher was completely unaware of the situation for some considerable time.

9. Many students are learning at least one practical skill that can be transferred into employment or training outside the college. For example, through the Team Enterprise Hide and Seek Company, students are able to develop management skills, which they apply to their own businesses when they leave. Some students are planning to sell cards and gifts that they make when they leave college.

10. A well-established teaching and tutorial observation programme is in place with formal observation of teaching once a year. The Teachers' Pay Initiative (TPI) staff scheme uses the data from the observations to inform judgements. Separate staff development reviews contribute to a continuous professional development programme. Unsatisfactory teaching leads to further observation and management support. Teams of five senior managers and five practitioners have been trained in observation against the criteria of the *Common Inspection Framework*. Teaching grades from inspectors did not match the college grade profile with more of the higher grades being awarded by the college. Where teaching has been deemed to be unsatisfactory, senior management have intervened and followed through and resolved issues. In a few cases, staff have been redeployed into more appropriate roles.

11. Staff are well qualified, with all teaching staff holding a basic teaching qualification and 64% hold an additional qualification for teaching students with learning difficulties. All care staff have completed, or are in the process of completing, qualifications required by the National Care Standards Commission. A good range of specialist staff is employed by the college to meet the very specific needs of the diverse population of the college. Professional development opportunities are well planned and appropriate for the needs of the community, ensuring that staff are well informed about current initiatives and changes in legislation. The current programme does not fully address issues related to teaching and the impact this has upon learning. The range and quality of specialist provision is very good, with many of the vocational programmes taking place in realistic environments with daily access to the public. Most areas are at industry standard or better.

12. Accommodation for teaching and in the residences is of a high quality. Students live and work in very pleasant and well-maintained surroundings. The college has a cycle of on going maintenance and refurbishment with students fully involved in the selection of furnishings and decoration schemes. A minority of students are accommodated in triple bedrooms. The college plans to move from this unsatisfactory situation through the new build provision in September 2003. The new accommodation for the students with a high level of care support needs is of an exceptionally high standard with all amenities promoting as much independence as possible. Provision for independent

study and access to library facilities is unsatisfactory. The college has acknowledged this in their self-assessment report and has plans well underway to build a new resource base attached to a library and Internet café for the students. Students generally feel safe and enjoy using the 50-acre site for leisure and work. Some students reported feeling unsafe with the public access to facilities and several wanted to have locks on their bedrooms. The college does have close circuit television in some residential areas and is responding to the provision of locks for all students' rooms, as identified in the recent National Care Standards commission report for the college. Many of the resources and accommodation allow students to live and work in realistic environments, often working directly with the public.

13. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are good. Assessment is rigorous and generally makes an effective contribution to the planning of individual learning programmes. Pre-entry and initial assessments are comprehensive and thorough. They lead to the effective identification of students' individual needs for learning, support and care. During a student's first term in college, a multi-disciplinary team assesses independent living skills, care and support requirements, vocational interests and competence in basic skills. This process takes account of the assessment information provided by referring agencies, and includes the initial identification of risks. The speech and language therapy department makes a particularly effective contribution to the identification of students' individual communication needs. Although assessment is generally well coordinated, the assessment of students' key skills needs does not take enough account of the results of diagnostic assessments in literacy and numeracy. As a result, vocational tutors do not know enough about students' literacy and numeracy needs.

14. Personal tutors work with students to set individual learning goals. Departments use these as a basis for setting more specific learning objectives related to their specific curriculum areas. The core individual learning goals match students' needs, but are too broad and too imprecise. This makes it difficult for tutors in vocational departments to set appropriate learning objectives, which appropriately identify the small learning steps towards the achievement of the goal. Students' attainment in some curriculum areas is thereby limited. Personal tutors also monitor the progress of individual students in achieving their individual learning goals by recording a summary of the objectives achieved in all areas of the students' programme, using the college's tracking system. The college milestones document provides a good framework for tracking the achievements and progress of students. However, the quality of the recording is not consistent. Where it is good, it gives a very clear picture of students' progress.

15. Information about the assessment and monitoring of individual students is kept up to date and is very effectively communicated to all members of staff. The college intranet provides a particularly efficient means of access to this information for staff and for students.

16. Personal tutors effectively summarise students' progress for parents, students and Connexions and Careers Wales advisors for review purposes. However, the college does not distribute reports in advance of review meetings and nor are copies provided at the meetings. This reduces the opportunities that parents and external advisors have for discussion of the students' progress. The college provides parents, funding bodies and external agencies with reports on students' progress at least annually, and more often when requested. Although reports contain detailed and helpful information, the present system is too complex and makes it difficult to evaluate students' overall progress with teachers, trainers and support staff writing reports and using different formats.

17. Transition planning is carefully and thoughtfully managed. It forms an integral part of the process of assessment and monitoring of students' progress. Students are generally successful in reaching their planned destinations. Managers do not systematically collate and analyse information about students' individual learning needs and progress in order to guide developments in courses and programmes. For example, initial assessments identify a number of students whose individual needs in literacy and numeracy are not currently met.

18. The college's response to the needs and interests of students is good. Programmes are well matched to students' interests and abilities. The social use of language programme, taught by the speech therapy team, develops students' social skills. The college is also a centre of excellence for teaching and training in Makaton. A programme of personal development is offered to first-year

students, which provides a good introduction into the life of, and relationships within the college by the use of a citizenship programme. Within this programme, effective guidance and information relating to sexual relationships, drug and alcohol abuse are discussed with students.

19. Students have access to a wide range of programmes across the extended curriculum and in the local community. However, a significant number of students do not access the leisure and sporting activities. There is an outstanding programme of enrichment visits including those to the Houses of Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, an urban wetlands experience, a cake exhibition, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) *Good Food Show*, the *Doctor Who* exhibition, the British Grand Prix and the BBC *Clothes Show*, which all students access. There are significant and purposeful links with the local community and 31 students attend programmes in a local college of further education.

20. The vocational programme is rich and varied. The curriculum in vocational areas is firmly embedded in realistic and practical working environments. In particular, the areas of catering, hospitality and horticulture offer exceptional opportunities for students to gain NVQs from pre-entry to level 2 and work closely with the local community. Key skills have recently been introduced into all programmes, but, as yet, they are not effectively integrated into them. The links between literacy, numeracy, language and key skills are ineffective. As a result, the teaching of literacy, numeracy and language lacks focus. The majority of students are working at pre-entry to level 1.

21. The curriculum and programmes of work are socially inclusive. Individual programmes of work, care and support enable students to access a wide variety of appropriate qualifications. Accreditation is well planned to provide for progression and cohesion across the curriculum. The introduction of key skills across the curriculum has obscured the focus on the teaching of literacy and numeracy in many programmes. A significant number of students make a successful transition to independent living on leaving college.

22. Students receive very good support and guidance in all areas of college life. Members of staff form very good relationships with students. The students and their parents speak very highly of the support that the college provides. From the time that they first contact the college, students receive thoughtful and impartial guidance from a multi-disciplinary care and support team to help them to choose the most appropriate course. The sensitive support provided for new students enables them to settle quickly into college life. Students' individual learning needs are accurately assessed both before and during their time in college. In most cases, their needs are well met. However, the lack of clarity in the organisation of key skills and the provision for literacy and numeracy in the college mean that many students who need support to improve their literacy and numeracy do not receive it. The guidance for students relating to careers progression and work-related opportunities is well structured within the college's vocational programme, but there is insufficient access to resources and materials for independent research by students. Links with the local community are good and support the development of students' social skills, however, the external work experience programme is underdeveloped.

23. During their time in college, students have regular access to a trained counsellor and to a personal tutor. They are able to discuss their progress with their personal tutor and to change their individual learning programmes as their needs and interests change. They receive support for more personal concerns from counsellors and residential care staff and, in some instances, from a psychologist who attends one day per week and is a part-time member of staff. Although a high level of personal support is available to all students, the less able students do not fully understand the different roles of counsellors and personal tutors. As a result, they sometimes miss opportunities for support when they need it. The residential care staff provide very effective and unobtrusive support for students. This encourages students to become as independent as possible whilst at the same time ensuring that they are safe and happy in college.

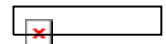
24. Students receive very good specialist support from nurses, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, and a visiting psychologist. The work of these staff members is well integrated into all programme areas and is highly valued in the college. There is good communication between different members of staff, which helps to ensure that students receive a quick and effective response to any concerns. The college is sensitive to the need to keep some information confidential without reducing the quality of support for students. The college has clear and effective procedures

in place for reporting and following up students who are late arriving for sessions. This helps to ensure the students' safety on site and to encourage their full participation in their learning programmes.

25. Members of staff encourage students to participate fully in all aspects of college life. The student council provides effective representation for students and achieves changes in the college. However, some of the student council representatives consider that the college management team is over-represented at meetings. Students are represented on interview panels for staff appointments.

26. There is a very positive ethos in the college. The college values diversity and members of staff have a thorough understanding of the implications of a wide range of disabilities. As a result, students feel appreciated and respected, and they grow in self-confidence.

Leadership and management



27. Leadership and management are good. The director and senior managers give the college a clear direction. The mission and values of the college are understood and shared by staff at all levels. All issues raised at the last inspection have been fully addressed. Strategic and developmental plans are detailed, but target setting is underdeveloped. There are good levels of student achievement across a wide range of abilities.

28. Quality assurance procedures and policies are well documented and robust. The quality committee systematically reviews all action plans and they are also monitored by heads of department every term. The college responds well to the views of students, parents and employers gained through surveys. Self-assessment is effective in gaining responses from all staff. The process is relatively new and the quality of review and evaluation is developing, but is not yet successful in setting challenging targets for improvement. Risk assessment is good.

29. The management structure is under review to ensure that it meets the needs of a changing client group through an appropriate human resources strategy. The director of curriculum leads curriculum management effectively. However, middle managers lack training and have heavy workloads, but have little authority. Some overlaps between care and teaching responsibilities can cause uncertainties in line management. Timetabling arrangements adversely affect student learning and staff time is not always effectively used. There is little time allowed for preparation. For example, students leave vocational courses to attend leisure and sports activities and return to sessions unable to reintegrate into activities.

30. There is good communication between care and curriculum staff, and growing use of the intranet is supporting good communication across the college. The structure of the management team ensures that administrative procedures and estates management are effective. The college is beginning to analyse and use data on students' progression and destination. Recording procedures for attendance and punctuality are inconsistent.

31. An extensive staff development programme is well managed and monitored. Staff development opportunities are linked to strategic planning, for example ensuring that all teaching staff are qualified and care staff hold an appropriate National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). There is an annual review of staff development and a well-established formal scheme of teaching observation. Although effective in identifying staff development needs, neither system is sufficiently rigorous in systematically disseminating good practice or identifying under performance.

32. An outstanding feature of the college is the promotion and sustaining of equal opportunities. Cultural diversity is widely celebrated both within the curriculum and through the extensive extended curriculum. The explicit aims and values on equality of opportunity, outlined in the college's policy,

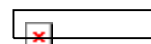
are clearly understood and implemented by staff and students. The equal opportunities policy was amended and updated in April 2003 and is fully compliant with the SENDA 2001 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Governors' response to ensuring a strategic response to legislation is good.

33. Systems for complaints and appeals are well documented. Serious incidents are carefully recorded and reported to the LSC. Harassment and bullying policies and procedures are also in place, but most issues raised by staff and students are dealt with effectively before requiring the attention of the formal procedures.

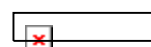
34. Governors have made an outstanding contribution to the development of the college. Their knowledge of key issues facing the college is thorough. Governors monitor the performance of the college closely and have a strong interest in the success and welfare of the students. They have a good awareness of areas of the college that are under performing and effectively monitor progress against the strategic plan and self-assessment report. Governors are clear about their strategic role and have used their expertise well to give good support to the college, for example they act as student advocates and participate in senior management meetings and training events. The director of the college acts as clerk to the board of governors, which could lead to potential conflict of interests. The board has recently addressed an identified pattern of poor attendance at governors' meetings. The trustees fulfil their duty under charity law.

35. Financial management is good and priorities are identified and reviewed by the senior management team and governors. Central funding is managed effectively and there are plans to devolve budgets to departments. The accommodation strategy is particularly well managed with a major new building project being completed successfully, within budget and on time. There is some under deployment of staff, but overall there is good value for money. Students receive high quality care and support in realistic working environments from well-qualified teachers, trainers, and support and care staff.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Literacy, numeracy communication and key skills



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

Strengths

- highly-committed students
- good levels of progress in communication
- effective use of realistic contexts for learning

- effective teaching in integrated provision
- very good speech and language support.

Weaknesses

- inconsistent planning for individual need
- insufficient clarity in the organisation of key skills, and literacy and numeracy
- limited opportunities for students to develop and reinforce literacy and numeracy skills and concepts
- insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

36. The key skills department manages and supports the teaching of literacy, numeracy, communication and wider key skills objectives for all students across the curriculum. The key skills objectives have been developed by the college from the key skills qualifications and standards. The majority of the 189 students are working at pre-entry to level 1.

37. Most of the provision for key skills, literacy, numeracy, communication and language is integrated into the vocational programmes of study. Some students are taught in discrete classes or access additional communication and number workshops for students with specific learning difficulties. Some 18 students are working towards literacy and communication objectives through the medium of performing arts, which incorporates signing and sensory perception. Some 31 students attend literacy, numeracy and key skills courses at a local further education college.

Achievement and standards

38. Students are committed to their own learning and many make significant progress. Standards of work are satisfactory or good on most courses. For example, in the college restaurant, students were confidently using the till and accurately giving change to diners. Pre-entry and initial assessment is comprehensive and informs the individual learning plan goals, which are set by the personal tutor. The key skills facilitators in the department undertake the setting of key skills and literacy and numeracy objectives. These processes operate independently, but are designed to be complementary. This results in some inconsistencies in the quality or relationship of the goals and objectives, and in the framework they provide to plan effectively and manage learning.

39. Students have individual timetables and work towards their agreed learning goals. In 2001/02, 38 students achieved accredited qualifications, which included Associated Examining Board achievement tasks in literacy and numeracy, levels 1 and 2 and English Speaking Board at participation level.

40. A significant number of students have individual communication targets. Speech and language therapy staff support teachers in class by promoting specific strategies for verbal and non-verbal functional communication for individual students.

Quality of education and training

41. Teaching is well structured and effective in most integrated provision. In performing arts, teachers use expressive and creative activities to develop personal and communication skills. For example, in one class, students were practising dance movements to perform at the college fashion show. Students with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities practised and developed listening and concentration skills, and some effective problem-solving skills in relation to how to waltz without looking at their feet.

42. The application of individually-designed programmes and strategies is inconsistent. Some teachers use generic lesson plans with insufficient recording of specific individual learning objectives. In some lessons, activities and resources were not varied or matched to the learning level or the particular learning needs of the students. For example, in one class, students worked on the same exercise and reached the same point at the end of the lesson despite their different ability levels.

43. Goals and objectives identified in individual learning plans are not used effectively to inform the planning of lessons. Detailed tracking procedures allow for the recording of individual students' progress, but insufficient attention is paid to the planning and recording of the small steps of progress achieved by students. The complexities of some of the recording procedures obscure individual students' progress.

44. Learning accommodation is good. Realistic working environments provide effective contexts for learning. For example, in the college restaurant, coin recognition and money handling skills are practised by checking the till float.

45. Students have access to a good range of courses in literacy, numeracy, communication and key skills in a local further education college. However, there are insufficient opportunities for some students to develop and reinforce literacy and numeracy skills and concepts within Derwen. Through working primarily in integrated contexts, opportunities to meet these specific or additional development needs are sometimes missed. Individual support is provided for some students who have specific learning difficulties or additional learning needs. However, only a small number of students are supported through this recent, successful initiative. The pressure on the service affects the quality of the assessment and the completion of tracking information.

46. Students feel well supported by their staff and by the positive and constructive relationships, which promote learning and develop confidence. Some 145 students receive speech and language support. The speech and language centre has recently been designated a Makaton centre of excellence. Some 115 staff have received training in signing. Writing with symbols is accessible in most departments and some college documentation is translated into symbols.

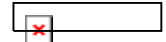
Leadership and management

47. Communication in the department is good. Staff meet and share informally on a regular basis and hold weekly team meetings. There is insufficient clarity in the overall organisation of key skills and literacy and numeracy across the college. The college key skills framework is not consistent with the core curriculum framework used by the college. This means that some students' literacy and numeracy needs are not fully addressed. The department manager and key skills facilitators have undertaken accredited training and are committed to the introduction of the adult curriculum

framework for literacy and numeracy.

48. The standards of teaching and learning are insufficiently monitored with little formal sharing of identified good teaching and learning practice within the department. In addition, insufficient information is available on the quality or appropriateness of the learning experience of students who attend the local further education college and these are not monitored effectively.

Pre-vocational and vocational subjects



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

Strengths

- exemplary teaching and learning in catering
- a wide range of vocational programmes
- very good range of realistic working environments
- good support for communication skills.

Weaknesses

- insufficiently focused learning objectives
- underdeveloped planning for individual students
- ineffective timetable planning
- insufficient allocation of time for staff preparation.

Scope of provision

49. The college offers a wide range of vocational programmes including catering, horticulture, hospitality and housekeeping, practical skills, office skills, retail, textiles and design together with work-based training in joinery, environmental work in Derwen Estates and retail work in the garden centre run by Derwen Enterprises. All students undertake a taster programme as part of their assessment during their first term and can then choose to specialise in one or more areas. Students are able to achieve accreditation through the National Proficiency Test Council (NPTC), entry level A and B Vocational Foundation Programme, NVQ and Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE). Key skills and literacy and numeracy skills are integrated into the vocational curriculum.

Achievement and standards

50. Students achieve work-related skills in some of the vocational departments. For example, students working in the catering department kitchen complete set tasks to an appropriately high standard at a good working pace, meeting the high expectations of the staff. Personal and learning skills, such as increased independence, confidence and communication, are developed through vocational opportunities. In one session, a student who had learnt how to safely use a stepladder was confidently showing another student how to do it. There is a lack of challenge in some sessions where students spend long periods of time in group discussions rather than working towards challenging individual targets. Learning goals are often too general to enable real progress in work-related skills to be measured.

Quality of education and training

51. The quality of teaching observed ranged from exemplary to less than satisfactory. In the best lessons, teaching is very well planned and organised. Demanding targets are set to which students aspire and which they achieve. For example, in the catering department, one student was confident in taking responsibility for the task of frying potatoes and checking the correct temperature for serving. Students' potentially disruptive behaviour is very well managed. In less successful sessions, the planning and teaching are not sufficiently differentiated or challenging to meet individual learning needs. Individual learning goals are inadequate to assist students' progress towards their end goal. For example, students who are aspiring to enter supported employment on exit from the college do not have sufficiently focused goals to enable them to achieve the required work skills. Timetables are designed so that some students arrive well into a teaching session and others leave part way through to go to other activities. This has an impact on learning and attainment. For example, a student who arrived at a session when the rest of the group had watched a video and were discussing what they had observed could not participate effectively. Some students arrived from a sports session, were tired and lacked any motivation to become involved in the session.

52. The college offers a very good range of realistic working environments that motivate students and enable them to work towards what is expected in external workplaces. For example, students run the college shop, work in the restaurants and kitchens, produce good quality wooden furniture and undertake real duties in administration and reception. Additional learning support staff do not support sessions. The college is well resourced, but some specific adaptations available were not being used appropriately to meet the specific students' needs. For example, a student with a visual impairment working on computer skills was positioned facing directly in front of a window where available blinds were not used to reduce the bright light.

53. Goals derived from initial assessment are not sufficiently focused to enable progress to be measured effectively towards students' end goals. Students are often asked to assess how well they have done at the end of sessions. This process is not linked to the setting of more challenging individual targets for the next session.

54. Although opportunities for using literacy and numeracy skills are integrated into many of the vocational sessions, some staff are not aware of the level at which individual students are working. For example, one student who was asked to read out his address explained to the tutor that he could not read.

55. Staff are supported in gaining skills in Makaton. Effective use is made of signing during

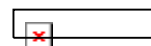
vocational sessions to support students with communication difficulties. The college is developing links with Connexions services and Careers Wales to assist with transition planning. It employs a part-time work placement officer to organise work experience opportunities.

56. The college provides a wide range of vocational programmes that support students in making appropriate choices and in meeting individual aspirations and skills. The range also includes the opportunity for accreditation from pre-entry to NVQ level 2 programmes. This arrangement effectively enables students to progress at their own pace during their placement at the college. Opportunities for students to experience work-related activities is very good, although opportunities to develop skills learnt in external work placements is limited.

Leadership and management

57. Curriculum management in the vocational area is satisfactory. Staff are involved with self-assessment within each vocational area. Weaknesses within the self-assessment report have largely been identified, but the strengths identified do not give a clear indication of the effectiveness of the vocational provision. Individual student timetables are not planned effectively. Staff have very limited scheduled time to prepare sessions effectively or record progress at the end of sessions. The promotion of equal opportunities is evident in the continuous professional development of staff, for example Makaton training and course evaluation to meet the changing needs of students.

Independent living skills



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

Strengths

- very appropriate practical focus
- strong and effective provision for personal development
- extensive range of opportunities for sport and leisure
- significant progress in the development of independence
- individual programmes responsive to students' needs.

Weaknesses

- insufficient specific learning objectives

- inadequate integration of key skills, literacy and numeracy
- over complex documentation on assessment.

Scope of provision

58. The areas inspected included independent living skills, personal development and leisure and sports. The independent living skills programme provides a curriculum framework based on key skills; delivered in the residential accommodation accessed by all students. It covers all aspects of care of self and possessions, road safety, shopping, self-catering and the effective handling of money. Not all students yet have access to personal development. The course has several modules taken by students who have most need. The first year of the programme focuses on citizenship as seen within the college community and the skills needed to play an effective role in college life. In the third year a greater emphasis is placed on living and working in the community. Other modules deal with sexual awareness, relationships and drugs awareness. Leisure and sport activities play a major role in the life of many students. There are over 20 clubs, including motor, swimming, basketball, football, computing and pottery. Many trips are arranged and students are encouraged to plan their own visits and events.

Achievement and standards

59. Overall the achievement of students is good with many students making significant progress in successfully achieving their primary learning goals identified on entry to the college. The lack of specific sessional learning goals leads to a lack of challenge for some students, particularly in the acquisition of key skills and literacy and numeracy. Students observed in sessions worked enthusiastically and willingly. Annual records indicate continuous improvement with the successful development of levels of confidence, increased independence in task completion and improved communication. Over 60% of students do not return to their family home at the end of their placement, but live, work or train in supported accommodation and employment. This clearly demonstrates success and achievement in personal growth for many students. All students are able to use the community more confidently and participate well in leisure and sports activities. Some become part of league teams and compete with other local teams. Students enjoy their sessions and over time show considerable progress towards independent living and effective social interaction.

Quality of education and training

60. Teachers are well experienced in dealing with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They develop good relationships based on detailed knowledge of student abilities and needs enabling them to support the development of self-confidence and the improvement of communication skills. All first-year students and leavers take part in the effective personal development provision. Tutors deliver programmes with sensitivity and confidence, enabling a positive and participatory response from students. Independent living skills are taught within the residential accommodation settings and reflect the daily activities of the students. These programmes are responsive to students' needs and are based on the initial and baseline assessments. Using information collated at student review meetings, programmes are adapted to reflect the changing needs of individuals. However, individual learning plans do not always include specific targets, which can be effectively measured. The non-negotiated use of targets for key skills, and literacy and numeracy, in addition to the curriculum targets, does not provide a coherent set of learning goals. Lesson planning does not include specific target setting and there is no structured differentiation or progressive tracking of small steps to the successful acquisition of a particular skill.

61. Resource which support and reinforce learning, particularly in relation to communication, literacy or numeracy are limited. Staff are well qualified and experienced, and operate within good quality accommodation for independent living skills and in the many excellent leisure and sports facilities offered by the college. Accommodation for personal development sessions is less satisfactory and the college acknowledges this in its self-assessment report. Supplementary teaching resources, however, are limited, with little access to personal computers or suitable software. Some staff recently attached to the section have insufficient experience in teaching the subject matter. Many staff have specialist qualifications and all can take advantage of a range of appropriate and effective staff development opportunities, which has a favourable impact upon their work in the college. Students have access to transport or funds for public transport and make effective use of the local environment. In all situations, there is sound attention paid to risk assessment and management.

62. The detailed entry and baseline assessment provides a sound basis from which the future programme for each student is developed. Course assessment is clearly based upon curriculum objectives, though the recording documentation requires the assessment of additional learning objectives, which are selected by the personal tutor. Assessment of these is not always possible in the natural course of the taught curriculum. There has been no attempt to map and cross-refer key skills, and literacy and numeracy into the curriculum. The tracking documentation is complex. While it results in a detailed and comprehensive review for the parental report and for external agencies, it does not support the planning of future sessions or the tracking of small steps towards full achievement. The criteria for success are rarely shared with students which restricts the development of their ability to assess their own learning.

63. Programmes are soundly based upon the assessed needs of individual learners, with a flexible and responsive approach to changing needs. Students are also encouraged to take up the wide range of sports and leisure opportunities offered, though not all do so. Provision for literacy and numeracy, and key skills within ILS is inadequate and hinders progression for some students. A comprehensive programme of personal development is offered to first-year students providing a firm basis for integration into the life of the college. It is offered to some third-year students in a different guise to provide a focused opportunity to explore the implications of their transition into the outside adult world. The independent living skills programme provides the necessary skills and knowledge to operate safely and effectively in personal life and, where appropriately, within the community. The individual programmes are selected from a list of competencies, which are most appropriate for each learner. The personal development programme is being developed and is as yet not available to all students.

Leadership and management

64. There has been clear direction and support for curriculum developments over the last few years, which has resulted in a large and vibrant ILS provision, and more recently the expansion of the personal development provision. The information provided by staff is used effectively by senior management to provide reports. The recently renamed heads of department have responsibility for the day-to-day running of their programmes, but are not part of a planning or decision-making process. There is little evidence of an effective monitoring process in relation to the quality of the provision. Duplications of care and teaching responsibilities lead to some line management uncertainties. The college makes efforts to include male teachers in teaching independent living skills which helps to promote equal opportunities in this curriculum area.