

David Lewis College

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	David Lewis College
Type of college:	Independent, specialist, residential
Principal:	Angela Heppenstall
Address of college:	Mill Lane Warford Nr Alderley Edge Cheshire SK8 7UD
Telephone number:	01565 640160
Fax number:	01565 640260
Chair of governors:	David Barclay
Reference number*:	111499
Name of reporting inspector:	Susan Preece HMI
Dates of inspection:	3-7 November 2003

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

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

The mission statement for the David Lewis College seeks 'to enable young people with complex epilepsy and related neurological conditions to make the optimum transition to adult living by recognising potential, developing skills, building confidence, raising self-esteem and maximising individual capacity for independence'.

How effective is the college?

The college makes satisfactory provision for students with a range of learning difficulties, complex

are satisfactory. Most students achieve their primary learning goals on completion of their programme. Most lessons are satisfactory or better and a significant proportion are good. Activities and programmes are insufficient to match the needs of a small minority of more able students. A good range of specialist resources and facilities are used effectively to support learning. Residential accommodation is satisfactory. The management of students' challenging behaviour is very good.

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

Key strengths

- effective development of communication skills for pre-entry learners

- very good development of independence, social and personal skills

- much good teaching of communication and decision-making skills

- good liaison between residential, care and education staff

- effective use of realistic contexts for learning

- very good use of behaviour management strategies

- imaginative approaches for the review of their learning by students

- well-resourced vocational areas

- good multi-disciplinary, pre-entry assessments

- high standards of care and support

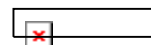
- a thorough self-assessment process.

What should be improved

- individual learning plans
- the analysis of trends in achievement
- the recording and monitoring of attendance and punctuality
- the range of activities for more able students
- diagnostic assessments
- the recording of students' progress
- the effectiveness of target setting
- the coherence of quality assurance systems
- centralised management information systems
- the evaluation of recently introduced initiatives
- the number of staff with specialist qualifications for teaching students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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

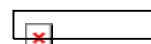
Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



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)

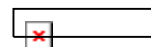
Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Literacy, numeracy and communication	Satisfactory: Imaginative approaches help students review their progress. The successful development of communication for learners with complex needs is supported by the creative use of information and communication technology (ICT). The recording and identification of learning are imprecise. Diagnostic assessment of literacy, numeracy and communication is inadequate and there are insufficient opportunities to match the learning needs of a small minority of more able students.
Vocational areas	Good: There is good teaching of practical vocational skills in a wide range of working environments; work-experience and work-based learning programmes are good and form a significant part of the transition programme. Behaviour strategies are used effectively, but punctuality is neither rigorously tracked nor well promoted. There is insufficient recording of small steps forward in learning that can inform target setting, and the number of qualified assessors is low.
Social and life skills	Satisfactory: Pre-entry assessment is comprehensive and thorough. Students develop good independence skills and effectively review progress in their learning. Consistent and effective strategies are used to manage behaviour, but individual learning plans are inadequate. In a minority of lessons, there is an over-reliance on worksheets, and a lack of activities and appropriate resources to match the needs of more able students.

How well is the college led and managed?



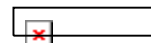
Leadership and management are satisfactory. A culture of continuous improvement is well established in all areas of the college. There has been effective leadership through a period of change. Strategic planning is satisfactory, but many of the targets set are insufficiently demanding. Operational management of the curriculum and residential provision are effective. Quality assurance procedures are adequate. Many initiatives have been introduced within the past year, however, they have not yet been effectively monitored and evaluated. Staff are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the college and a thorough process of self-assessment, involving all staff, effectively identifies priorities for improvement. Management information systems are inadequate and do not provide sufficient data to evaluate teaching and learning effectively. Most teaching is satisfactory or better and a significant proportion is good. The college's response to the promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. Governance and financial management are effective. The college provides good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



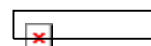
The college's response to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory. There is good promotion and acceptance of issues relating to disability and learning difficulties and a culture that values diversity. Some 7% of the current student population are from minority ethnic groups; this proportion has stayed similar over the past three years. The college does not offer key skills for all students. Literacy and numeracy are effectively integrated into most areas of the curriculum. There is satisfactory promotion of key skills, where appropriate. Procedures to co-ordinate the promotion of equality of opportunity, such as self-advocacy and the discussion of gender issues and sexuality, are adequate. Until very recently, the college relied on the centre's equal opportunities policy and had not developed and adopted one specifically for use by the college. Access for people with restricted mobility is good. Senior managers and governors have been slow to respond to their responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (RRA) 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001. Staff training to meet the requirements of both Acts is at an early stage of development. The recording of complaints and incidents is not thorough; no central record is maintained. A separate serious incidents logbook is not regularly maintained and lacks sufficient detail.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance for students are good both in the college and in residences. There is good impartial pre-entry guidance for potential students and their families. Students participate in effective pre-entry multi-disciplinary assessment to identify individual learning needs and levels of support. Induction is comprehensive. Individual programmes are designed to promote independence and confidence. Each student has a key worker and a personal tutor; all three meet together every half term or more frequently if needed. These tutorial meetings are effective in monitoring students' progress and evaluating the suitability of their individual programme. There are regular comprehensive multi-disciplinary team reviews and the college makes good use of the specialist support services available within the David Lewis Centre. There are very good strategies to manage students' challenging behaviour. Access to speech and language therapy support is insufficient. Good individual personal support is provided, and external counselling services are available, where appropriate. The transition process is satisfactory. The effective work-experience programme uses on-site facilities and established links with local employers. Links with the Connexions service and personal advisors are satisfactory.

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

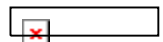
- residential homes

- making progress
- staff
- sports
- good teaching
- work experience
- being understood
- making lots of friends.

What they feel could be improved

- access to public transport
- behaviour of some students
- making some of the work harder.

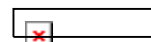
Other information



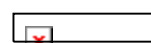
The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit

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. Most students achieve their primary learning goal on completion of their programme. Student retention rates are similar to those of other specialist colleges in England. Students' achievements are good overall. Where appropriate, students have their achievements recognised through a range of national awards which includes National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in food and drink, sports and administration; Numberwise; Wordwise; the English Speaking Board; Vocational Access Certificate; and Open College Network (OCN) units. Progress in accrediting external achievements has been slow. Pass rates on these awards are satisfactory.

2. Progress is satisfactory overall and good for students on pre-entry programmes. All students make significant gains in confidence and self-esteem. There are some missed opportunities for recognising achievements in literacy and numeracy, especially in the extended curriculum. Learners successfully develop and effectively use social and communication skills. Work-experience programmes provide opportunities for students to develop confidence and practical skills. For example, opportunities at the Rainbow Café, established on site, enable students to develop their work-related competencies and to have their achievements recognised through NVQ portfolios. These portfolios can benefit from further development. The college recognises the difficulties caused by the lack of qualified assessors and there are plans to improve this situation within the next two months.

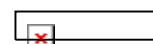
3. Students make good progress in achieving communication and independence skills. A student with a limited concentration span and poor behaviour has learned to communicate more effectively using Makaton signing. Her verbal skills are improving. She is now able to concentrate for longer periods and has recently produced some good art work. She has a better understanding of her own behaviour and interacts much more appropriately with staff and students. Another student, who was very reluctant to accept any changes to her preferred style of art, became involved in producing pictures and craft items for an extensive client market at the college. She set up a stall during break time to sell her work and managed to produce a wide variety of items in different styles, working on commissions. Students involved in team enterprise made significant achievements and again participated in the area finals for 2003.

4. Students' independence skills are well developed and reinforced through a carefully structured range of accommodation in the residential houses. Residences allow students to move, where appropriate, from a supported environment to more independent living arrangements. There are plans to establish housing in the community to prepare students for the final stage of this transition. Effective communication between residential, care and education staff contributes to students' development of independent living skills and to the sharing and celebration of their achievements. Information gathered from the monitoring of students' destinations indicates that the majority of leavers move onto supported living accommodation. Most have a mixed package of social services day provision and some part-time further and adult education. Over the past three years, a few leavers have been able to find sheltered employment; none have entered open, full-time

employment. The college's three-year development plan includes a commitment to improving students' employment opportunities.

5. Achievements are variously celebrated through, for example, photographic displays, the award of certificates, performances, reviews, annual reports, tutorials and records of achievement. The annual college awards ceremony is highly valued by students, parents and staff. Trends in achievement over time are not sufficiently recorded or used to inform future planning. Attendance and punctuality are not effectively recorded and monitored. Adult time management responsibility is not effectively promoted. Lateness is not challenged and the unstructured times of the day, such as lunch and breaks, do not keep to allocated times.

Quality of teaching, training and learning



6. Most lessons observed were satisfactory or better, and a significant proportion were good. Further sessions, which include tutorials, staff briefings, extra-curricular and residential activities, and lessons in the general further education (FE) colleges, contribute to the judgments relating to teaching and learning. Much good teaching was observed in vocational areas. Features of successful lessons include an appropriate adult focus, good teacher-student interactions, and the use of practical and relevant activities. In a creative arts lesson involving four students, each student was working on an individual project matched to their needs. One student was successfully learning hand eye co-ordination through making a collage, and another student was learning to recognise and choose colours for a picture. Good use is made of realistic learning opportunities both in the residences and the David Lewis Centre, during work-experience programmes and within the local community.

7. The needs of most students are effectively met. However, staff recognise that, for a small minority of more able learners, teaching is unsatisfactory. There is an inadequate range of activities to meet their specific needs. In the less satisfactory lessons, there is an over-reliance on inappropriate paper-based resources. For example, in a personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson, students were taught about job skills, such as teamwork and working independently, and career opportunities through the use of worksheet-based tasks and activities.

8. The recording of students' achievements is not sufficiently broken down into small steps of learning. In most areas, there is confusion about the distinction between initial, diagnostic and baseline assessments. There is a lack of diagnostic testing in literacy and numeracy. For example, two students who joined a part-time course at the local general FE college were unable to cope with the levels of literacy demanded by the programme. There is imprecise identification of learning goals and so individual learning plans are vague and unsatisfactory.

9. Staff know the students well and are skilled in encouraging them to participate fully in lessons, activities, and the life of the college and the residencies. They use their knowledge of students effectively to anticipate individual needs. Strategies to manage students' behaviours are comprehensive and are used consistently by all staff. One student used aggressive, and sometimes violent, behaviour to communicate her needs. As the result of a well-structured individual learning, care and behaviour programme, she has been helped to develop maturity and patience, and manage her time more constructively.

10. Most full-time teachers have teaching qualifications, although few have specialist qualifications in teaching students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. 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 are available to meet the very specific needs of the students. These staff include: the college nurse; doctor; speech therapist; neuropsychologist and consultant neuropsychiatrist; art therapist; and physiotherapist. Staffing levels are good and students are well supported across the extended curriculum. Staff receive regular training in educational, care and

medical issues. The current programme has not yet fully addressed issues related to teaching, such as diagnostic assessment, and the impact this has on learning. All new staff undertake an effective induction programme and each has a mentor.

11. Teaching accommodation is good. Rooms are light and students' work is often well displayed. Access to specialist learning resources, such as soundbeam technology, is good. Most teaching rooms are fit for purpose and have a computer with Internet access. The specialist art room, although attractive, is too small. The small library serves the wider adult community in the centre and the school, in addition to the college. There is insufficient careers education and guidance material available in the library. Very good use is made of the on-site resources and facilities, such as the sports hall, swimming pool, physiotherapy unit, light industries unit, snack bar and Rainbow Café. Although the Rainbow Café meets industry standards, the lack of food preparation areas limits the range of skills that can be developed and assessed. The residential homes provide an effective environment for the development of independence skills. Most are well decorated, but some would benefit from refurbishment. The size and open physical layout of one of the larger units, Elizabeth Maybin House, can impede effective behaviour management.

12. Reporting procedures for health and safety issues are effective. A comprehensive risk assessment process takes account of the complex needs of the students. Procedures were being reviewed at the time of the inspection to ensure that inflexibility in some areas of risk assessment does not disadvantage more able students. An international volunteer programme recruits young professional people and enables them to support student groups where appropriate. Volunteers provide positive role models for the students. Effective use is made of adaptive technology to support students with complex communication difficulties. A member of staff has recently been appointed as the information and learning technology (ILT) champion. She works effectively with the teachers and other staff to encourage the wider use of ILT, particularly in the creative arts curriculum. A comprehensive ILT strategy clearly identifies well-planned future developments.

13. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress can benefit from further development. Before students are given a place at the college, they participate in a thorough multi-disciplinary pre-entry assessment that takes account of information from the previous school and specialist support services. These comprehensive pre-entry assessments form a realistic basis for identifying the student's individual programme, which is then reflected in the schedule and purchase order. A further baseline assessment process has been introduced for continuous assessment over the first term. However, it is inconsistent in quality and used more as a tracking instrument to demonstrate students' progress. There is confusion among most staff about its purpose. There is no diagnostic screening for literacy, numeracy or communications. A system of setting cross-curricular goals has been developed and these are well integrated into all lessons. Individual goals, which are linked to students' individual learning plans, are specified on each lesson plan. These goals relate to personal and social development, behavioural issues, and literacy and numeracy. In the less satisfactory lessons, the goals do not consistently relate to the lesson. For example, in a keep-fit lesson, one of the individual targets was related to money and change, but there was little opportunity to practice these skills in the activities planned for the lesson. Individual learning plans do not contain sufficient detail, especially for students' medium-term goals.

14. A 'traffic light' system is used at the end of each lesson to help students to judge their own progress and record achievements against the goals that have been set for the lesson. Progress is colour coded: green indicates full achievement, orange partial achievement, and red no progress towards the goal. The traffic light system is easily understood, effectively motivates students and enables them to take increasing responsibility to negotiate and assess their own learning. Individual results from the traffic light system are recorded, analysed and reviewed regularly during tutorials. Value added achievements are well recognised and recorded. Staff share and record these achievements effectively and incorporate them into annual reports and records of achievement. Annual review reports are sufficiently detailed and include comprehensive information from the multi-disciplinary team. There are effective risk assessments for each student, and appropriate activities both on site and off site and across the extended curriculum. Those who have a legitimate interest are well informed of the progress that students are making.

15. The provision, which includes programmes from pre-entry level to level 2, is varied and

effectively matched to the needs and interests of most students. All programmes have a core entitlement of literacy, numeracy and communication; ILT; PSHE; independent living skills; and a structured transition programme in the final year. Where appropriate, students attend courses at local FE colleges and benefit from a range of vocational training opportunities, including work experience. The college offers a comprehensive enrichment programme that covers evening and weekend activities, and daily living in the houses. These opportunities include social and leisure events such as football, sewing, art and computer clubs, camping, and walking, and visits to cinemas, restaurants, sporting events and shops. All students are encouraged to participate in a range of vocational, sporting and creative activities, as well as developing leisure interests and hobbies. The use of practical activities as a basis for learning provides opportunities for students to develop and practise their skills. Individual programmes of work, care and support enable students to make effective progress.

16. Teachers effectively involve students in helping to plan their individual learning programmes and activities, and in making real choices through the extended curriculum. The breadth of vocational courses and well-structured work-experience programmes provide students with good opportunities to develop an understanding of the world of work. Students are able to gain experience from a wide range of placements within the centre, such as working in the Rainbow Café, the laundry, the centre's main reception area, and the maintenance department, before progressing onto community-based placements. Community facilities are successfully used to support the transition to adult life and, where appropriate, independent living. Overall, transition arrangements for students are satisfactory. Personal tutors maintain informal contact with students once they leave. A Connexions personal advisor attends the college for one day a week, working with individuals and small groups through the PSHE programme, and attending all transition reviews. Structured programmes for careers education and guidance are underdeveloped. All students spend at least one day a week learning in the community. There are satisfactory links with three local FE colleges. Students join specialist courses, such as drama, horticulture and sports studies, but these links need to be developed and extended, especially for the more able learners. Staff do not use Makaton consistently, and have not been appropriately trained to implement the total communication environment which is required for some students.

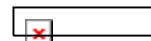
17. Support for students is good. There is good pre-entry advice and guidance for students and parents. Students are encouraged to visit the college and discuss their needs with college staff before applying. There is a rigorous initial assessment involving a multi-disciplinary team. The management of epilepsy is particularly effective. The experienced medical team works well with education and residential staff to monitor students and regularly review their clinical care. New students follow a well-planned induction process that is appropriately adapted to meet individual need. There is good use of photographs, symbols and other communication methods.

18. The college communicates effectively with parents. Staff contact parents/carers through e-mail and telephone, as well as providing formal reports of students' reviews. Staff encourage parents/carers to exchange e-mail addresses. Views are sought from staff, parents and students, and are successfully used to inform planning. A two-day induction for parents of new students is highly effective in overcoming family anxieties, and underlining the aims and values of the college. This highly valued induction gives groups of parents opportunities to share their experiences with each other, provide mutual support and offer additional information that benefits the assessment process.

19. The tutorial system involves each student, the personal tutor and the key worker. They all meet formally at least once each half term and informally when needed. The system is effective and well understood by students. Personal tutors receive regular and sufficiently detailed information from subject tutors, and care and residential staff regarding students' progress and outcomes from the traffic light system. Learning goals are reviewed with students and new targets are set. Care plans are comprehensive, well used and regularly updated, but there are inadequate links with students' individual learning plans. Good use is made of the David Lewis challenging behaviour unit to support students with particularly complex difficulties. There is a sensitive and consistent approach to managing students' behaviour. Learning support staff are effectively deployed to support learning and maintain students' appropriate behaviour. Not all staff are adequately trained to meet the communication needs of students with complex difficulties. There are plans to increase the

opportunities for students to have speech and language therapy. The role of the communication support worker is to be developed.

Leadership and management



20. Leadership and management of the college are satisfactory. Following a period of restructuring, the senior management team have established a culture of continuous improvement throughout the college. Several new initiatives have been introduced, such as the mentoring process and tracking of achievement. Staff are highly committed to these developments, but they have not yet been monitored and evaluated effectively. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process. Each member of staff contributes to the departmental self-assessment. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the current self-assessment report. The college management involves all staff in the strategic planning process, but the targets set for achievement, progression and transition are not sufficiently demanding. There is insufficient evaluation of the aims and objectives to inform managers and staff for future planning.

21. Good communication between education, care and residential staff promotes a consistent approach to meeting the needs of individual students. There are daily tutor meetings. Residential and education support workers join these meetings on two occasions each week. A communications log, recording students' issues such as achievement, behaviour and any individual concerns, is completed daily by pastoral tutors and residential staff. This log is exchanged between college tutors and the staff in the residential houses at the end of each college day and collected again each morning. These strategies ensure swift dissemination of information to support students' progression. A series of formally recorded staff meetings ensures there is effective communication between all staff. There are effective mentoring arrangements for staff, which resulted from recommendations made in a comprehensive staff survey. There is a clear policy and guidance about the responsibilities for mentor and mentee. Staff meet informally once or twice a week and formally recorded sessions are held half-termly. Staff are well supported in their new roles and can request a further mentoring period if they change their roles within the college.

22. Quality assurance procedures are satisfactory. There is an adequate range of policies and procedures, but the content of the quality cycle lacks sufficient coherence. Although there has been a recent review of some policies, many are undeveloped and lack the date of origin, or date for review. New policies are appropriately dated, record the author of the policy, the named person who has responsibility for monitoring its implementation and specify a review date. There is a well-established cycle of teaching observations. The results are analysed and targets are set for improvement. An effective staff appraisal system is in place which identifies staff training and development needs. The college has a structured professional development plan that is effectively linked to the centre's training plan. Professional development opportunities are clearly planned and regularly developed, but staff have not yet received sufficient training in relation to literacy, numeracy and diagnostic testing. Health and safety, and risk management procedures are good. All students have risk assessments for all areas of their programmes, and these also include activities in the extended curriculum and work-experience activities. At one work placement, the student had both a college and an employer risk assessment.

23. The college's response to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory. The management team are committed to the provision of equality of opportunity for all students and staff, and procedures to co-ordinate the promotion of equality of opportunity, such as self-advocacy and the discussion of gender issues and sexuality, are adequate. However, until the month before inspection, the college relied on the centre's equal opportunities policy and had not developed and adopted one solely for use by the college. The recently introduced college equal opportunities policy is insufficiently established and had not been evaluated at the time of inspection. There has been a slow response to some legislative requirements. The college has not yet responded to its responsibility to promote issues relating to racial equality in the RRA or to the required anticipatory

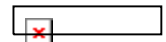
duty for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities under the SENDA. Complaints and incidents are not recorded thoroughly. There is no central system of recording and some complaints are not accurately dated. A separate serious incidents log book is not regularly maintained and lacks sufficient detail.

24. There is no centralised management information system. The college relies heavily on a paper-based system of collating information that provides insufficient information for staff. Work has been undertaken to update the college infrastructure, and new cabling has been laid in preparation for a new ILT network and centralised computer-based management information system.

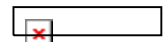
25. Governors are enthusiastic and committed to overseeing the governance of the college. They were involved in developing the strategic plan and are familiar with the self-assessment report. Governors are kept well informed about college operations and students' achievements. Most visit the college regularly. College governors had not received specific training by the time of inspection, nor do new governors have a structured induction programme.

26. Financial management of the college is good and resources are deployed effectively. The level of complexity of the needs of the students requires significant additional resources. The income from fees does not always cover these costs. The college negotiates with the David Lewis Centre to set its annual budget. Specific projects, such as the recently approved ILT strategy, are negotiated separately. The college principal receives monthly statements outlining performance against budget headings. These statements allow expenditure to be monitored and controlled but they lack detailed information that would enable problems to be analysed effectively and sound decisions made. The college provides good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Literacy, numeracy and communication



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- students' effective review of their own progress
- creative use of ICT to support learning
- effective development of communication for learners with complex needs.

Weaknesses

- imprecise identification and recording of learning goals
- inadequate diagnostic assessment
- insufficient opportunities to extend learning for more able students.

Scope of provision

27. The college offers all students discrete and integrated provision of literacy, numeracy and communication. The provision ranges from pre-entry level to level 2. ICT supports learning. At each level, students have the opportunity to have their achievements accredited through the English Speaking Board national awards. In 2003, the college introduced some units of OCN, Wordwise and Numberwise, which are available at entry level to level 2. Literacy and numeracy are integrated into practical activities in all curriculum areas and within the residential settings.

Achievement and standards

28. The development of students' communication is good. Students with complex needs and communication difficulties are developing relevant social and personal goals, as well as functional skills that will contribute positively to the quality of their lives. For example, one young man with a tendency to interrupt has learnt to sign and say 'excuse me' to gain attention appropriately. Another student has learned to use objects of reference to communicate and has improved her eye contact and concentration. A student at entry level 1, has learnt to use a calculator to improve his money management skills. He can now make a contribution to everyday activities, such as working out the cost of an item or calculating change. There are insufficient data available about achievements on national awards. The student retention rate is comparable with that expected for a specialist college. The monitoring and recording of punctuality is poor. Students regularly arrive late for lessons and this is not always challenged.

Quality of education and training

29. Most teaching is satisfactory or better, and a significant proportion is good. Lessons are generally well planned and most activities are matched to students' need. Students are well motivated and work effectively in most lessons. Staff provide sensitive support and consistently use well-established behaviour management strategies to good effect. Students, many of whom have complex behavioural and communication needs, display largely appropriate behaviour. Good levels of staff support secure and promote students' participation in a range of activities and learning. Individual targets for each student in literacy, numeracy and communication are incorporated into lesson plans in all curriculum areas.

30. In the most effective lessons, learning is developed through relevant practical activities. A range of appropriate teaching strategies and resources are used to develop literacy, numeracy and communication skills. In an ICT lesson, students were able to practise counting and addition, using a software programme. This activity was then supplemented by physical resources to secure the concept of addition. In a drama and movement lesson, games were used imaginatively to develop students' vocabulary, concepts and social interaction. A ball was passed from person to person by selecting and naming an individual, whilst acting out a concept such as 'the ball is hot and smelly'. In a small number of less satisfactory lessons, resources did not support the development of learning appropriately. For example, a student learning to count was using an abacus, but had insufficient understanding of one-to-one matching to use it effectively. As a result, the teacher, and not the student, completed the learning task. In another lesson, the teacher was using a cardboard clock to

teach time and assess the students' abilities in this area, even though most of the students were wearing watches. There is an overemphasis on paper-based resources in a minority of lessons, resulting in insufficient development of concepts through practical activities.

31. Effective teaching and learning are supported by the good use of adaptive technology, including Intelli-keyboards, switches, roller ball and one-step communicators. Effective use is made of appropriate software to improve students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills. The development of ICT skills as a leisure interest is promoted. The member of staff appointed as the ILT champion has been allocated a significant amount of time to work with a range of staff to develop provision and suitable resources. ICT has been used creatively, for example, to import photographs of family members into documents to stimulate students' response, and to exploit the motivational use of a switch by connecting it to a stereo. The college library provides suitable materials to support teaching in a variety of media, such as books, audios and CD-ROM formats. These materials have been used effectively to create relevant displays that celebrate students' work, for example, a display for national poetry day.

32. Pre-entry assessment procedures are thorough and result in appropriate detailed assessment information relating to all curriculum areas. Students' support needs are successfully identified in relation to literacy, numeracy and communication, and are further defined by speech and language therapy assessment. Induction is well planned and appropriate. It includes the use of a range of activities and resources, in the context of the size of text, use of symbols and format that are matched to students' individual needs. A successful method of involving students in reviewing their own progress, the traffic light system, is clearly understood and valued by students. It helps them to take charge of their learning goals, and promotes evaluation of learning and celebration of achievement. The tripartite tutorial system provides an effective way of sharing information and reviewing progress, especially in relation to cross-curricular learning goals.

33. Diagnostic screening is not available for literacy, numeracy or communication skills. Terminology surrounding the recently introduced baseline assessment is sometimes confused and the process is insufficiently detailed to provide a clear picture of the ability levels of each student. Staff have insufficient training for diagnostic assessment and there are misunderstandings among them about the distinction between screening, initial, diagnostic and baseline assessment. Some tutors are unclear about the literacy and numeracy levels of individual students and of the group. As a result, a minority of students undertake tasks that do not match their ability. There are insufficient opportunities to extend the learning of more able students, for example, the teaching of time to a student already competent in the use of the 24-hour clock. In another lesson, the rate of completion of worksheets by a level 1 student indicated that the tasks were insufficiently challenging and did not extend his learning.

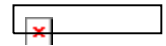
34. The identification and recording of learning for literacy and numeracy are imprecise. In the less effective lessons, learning is not sufficiently broken down into small steps and the cross-curricular literacy and numeracy goals do not consistently relate to the learning that occurs within the lesson. For example, in a keep-fit class for pre-entry and entry level 1 students, the target for one learner involved the use of money, but there was insufficient opportunity to practise this particular goal. However, the lesson was effective in developing appropriate learning such as direction of movement, colour and shape, and provided numerous opportunities for students to follow instructions in practical situations. The learning achieved was neither effectively recorded nor used to inform future planning. Individual learning plans are insufficiently detailed to support the assessment, planning and monitoring of learning; they are not effective documents.

35. The development of communication for learners with complex needs is very good. Clear and appropriate communication goals specify the purpose, context and implementation strategies, as well as establishing clear criteria for recognising achievement. Appropriate and suitably adult focused objects of reference and pictorial cues are used effectively to extend understanding and communication opportunities for learners with complex needs. Staff who are experienced in working with pre-entry learners effectively teach and support the development of Makaton in well-structured lessons. However, the use of Makaton signs and symbols by all staff across the college is inconsistent. Current arrangements provide insufficient access to speech and language therapy support.

Leadership and management

36. Management of the curriculum is satisfactory with effective communication amongst the team and across the college. An honest and largely accurate self-assessment report has led to appropriate action, such as the appointment of the specialist communication support staff and the planning of funding to purchase additional speech therapy. Senior managers are committed to developing the quality of the provision and have introduced a series of appropriate initiatives that are beginning to result in improvements. There are regular and well-documented team and cross-college meetings for the development and co-ordination of literacy, numeracy and communication across the curriculum. These include curriculum co-ordinators, tutors and basic skills teams. An effective ILT strategy has been developed. There are some ineffective recording procedures for dating and signing documentation. Statements of purpose in curriculum documentation help to raise staff awareness of the issues and highlight the college's commitment to, and satisfactory promotion of, equal opportunities.

Vocational areas



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- a good range of realistic working environments
- good teaching of practical vocational skills
- effective work-experience and work-based learning programmes
- effective application of behaviour strategies.

Weaknesses

- inadequate emphasis on punctuality
- insufficient recording of learning to inform target setting
- an insufficient number of qualified assessors.

Scope of provision

37. The college offers a vocational programme that includes opportunities for internal and external work placements. Students have access to a range of national awards and vocational courses, both in the college and at local FE colleges. At the time of the inspection, these courses extended from entry level to NVQ level 2 in food and drink, administration, animal care and horticulture. Other vocational programmes provided students with opportunities to acquire vocational foundation skills and promoted personal, social and basic skills within a range of settings. Where appropriate, students undertake work experience, initially within the college, then within the David Lewis Centre; some progress to external placements within the local community. Work experience is an element of the vocational programme area and is an integral part of the transition process.

Achievement and standards

38. Achievements in vocational areas are good, and many students improve their understanding of the workplace and of work disciplines. For example, students working within the college Rainbow Café or snack bar are required to maintain professional standards of hygiene and personal presentation. Increased confidence, and personal and basic skills develop over time. Progress is made by most students achieving their primary learning goals by the end of their programme. Between 2000 and 2003, there was a consistent improvement in the numbers of students completing units of the vocational access programme. At the time of the inspection, there was a low number of qualified assessors to assess all students' work.

39. The traffic light system to evaluate progress and record achievement is easily understood, and is successfully used to motivate students. This process includes the opportunity for students to negotiate and take responsibility for assessing their own achievements. During one lesson, deliberation about the appropriate judgement promoted candid self-assessment, mature discussion between peers, and the reinforcement of personal and vocational goals.

40. There is good development of students' confidence in vocational settings. One student, on a work-experience placement in a local supermarket, successfully participated in the employers' formal induction process and now works under the same conditions, except for discreet medical support, as other employees at the checkout. He relates well to those members of the public he is assisting, despite his significant communication difficulties and frequent medical problems.

Quality of education and training

41. Teaching within vocational programmes is good. Most of the lessons observed were good or better. Most teachers have expertise in their subject areas and are very aware of the needs of their students. They use their detailed knowledge well within lessons and employ consistent and well-planned strategies to help meet the complex needs of individual students. Makaton signing and signs are used effectively to assist learning.

42. Students have good opportunities during induction week to sample different activities and then choose vocational areas and other options. Sound guidance is given concerning the appropriateness of their choice of course, with specific reference to pre-entry assessment. However, once a student has chosen a vocational programme, there is insufficient recording of achievements to inform realistic target setting. Individual learning programmes are vague and are not used effectively.

43. Students benefit from the highly practical focus of the vocational programmes. In the most effective lessons, teachers provide a good range of practical tasks to motivate students. Well-organised and individually matched activities in a woodwork lesson provided excellent opportunities for students to attain high levels of achievement. The teaching was well planned so that all students were fully engaged on highly practical, individual tasks and, through effective teamwork, all contributed to the production of a rustic garden chair. The students had a great sense of achievement and, as the chair was still a topic of conversation for the students the following day, the

task informally continued to develop their communication and recall skills. Lesson plans are appropriately detailed and include personal and literacy, numeracy and communication goals. Learning and behavioural strategies are effectively shared and all students have a risk assessment that is attached to their documentation. There is a lack of rigour in registering and monitoring attendance and punctuality, missing opportunities to reinforce a basic work discipline.

44. The well-structured and supportive work-experience programmes use college work areas for internal work placements. External work experience provides valuable real-work practice within the type of employment that may be a destination for some students. For example, one student, who wishes to work as a care assistant when she completes her course, has embarked upon appropriate work experience within the David Lewis Centre. In a minority of cases, there is inconsistent allocation of support workers for external placements. As a consequence, the lack of continuity and full understanding of the learning needs of individual students restricts their chances to learn. Students who attend the local FE colleges benefit not only from the formal teaching in the vocational lessons, but also gain valuable informal learning opportunities. For example, they extend their personal and social skills through interaction with their peers within a large educational establishment; there are similar informal benefits in work-based situations. Travel arrangements for students who have to travel to the most distant FE colleges are unsatisfactory. The college transport arrives before the lessons finish and this reduces the students' opportunities to gain accreditation and to have their achievements recorded and recognised.

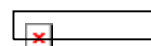
45. Staff-student ratios in all lessons are very good and have a positive effect on learning. Very good quality staff-student interactions and an adult approach were noted in most of the lessons observed. Effective use is made of learning support assistants. They are well managed and have a sound knowledge of students' individual needs. Assistants use their knowledge successfully to provide sensitive, and where appropriate, discreet support.

Leadership and management

46. The management of the vocational curriculum area is good. Managers understand the value of a practical programme area in engaging and positively motivating students towards success. Good management of facilities and resources provides realistic contexts for learning. A three-year plan has been developed to extend the vocational opportunities within the centre. This has incorporated car-washing into the vocational curriculum, and retail and hot food delivery are planned for the future. There is sound management of health and safety. All students have an individual risk assessment and all vocational areas, work placements and work-based activities have a formal risk assessment. High standards of basic health and safety in the workplace are promoted and observed.

47. Vocational curriculum leadership is increasing the opportunities for a greater inclusion in society for people with epilepsy. The three-year development plan includes a commitment to improving students' employment opportunities. There are effective and developing links between the college and the vocational departments of the local FE colleges. A strong relationship has been established with various work-placement providers within the wider community. Staff views are valued by managers and all staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process and have been able to contribute to the report. Some quality assurance procedures have recently been developed, but are not fully established within the overall quality cycle of the organisation. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. Work-experience providers have equal opportunities policies that are included within their own induction and staff conditions, but until recently, the college did not have its own specific equal opportunities policy, but instead relied on the use of the overall centre-wide policy.

Social and life skills



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- comprehensive and thorough pre-entry assessment
- good development of independence skills
- good use of strategies to manage behaviour.

Weaknesses

- an inadequate range of activities for more able learners
- a narrow range of teaching methods and resources in a minority of lessons
- inadequate individual learning plans.

Scope of provision

48. Social and life skills include provision in creative and performing arts, PSHE, sport, team enterprise, therapies and independent living skills delivered through the extended curriculum in the residential houses. All students participate in all, or part, of this provision. Students range in ability from pre-entry to level 2. Each student has an individual programme which is generally matched to specific needs. Lessons take place within the college, residential houses and in a broad range of community facilities. In addition, 11 students benefit from the facilities and courses in 2 local FE colleges. Of these, two students are undertaking units of an NVQ level 2 qualification in sport and recreation, and another two students are undertaking a leisure course at the same college. A further seven entry level drama students attend a weekly drama workshop at a second local college.

Achievement and standards

49. Students demonstrate significant improvement in confidence and independence skills. The extended curriculum provides real contexts for learning and promotes the development of independence through the range of accommodation available in the residential houses. Students' independence is also developed through the experience and responsibilities of working on team enterprise projects and through opportunities arising from the links with local FE colleges. The students are fully integrated within the student group and the occurrence of regular seizures is managed in a sensitive and appropriate manner by staff and other students. To fulfil the practical requirements of their course, the students organise evening sports sessions which are part of the extended curriculum. Coaching their peers has further extended and developed their confidence and independence.

50. A narrow range of activities is available for more able learners. Of the two national awards available within social and life skills, one is taught in the college through drama, and the second,

NVQ level 2 sport and recreation, is taught at a local FE college. Personal goals and those for literacy, numeracy and communication are fully established in all curriculum activities. There is no diagnostic screening in literacy and numeracy, and teachers are unable to identify the level or learning needs of individual students accurately. More able students undertake some activities of an inappropriate standard which do not develop individual knowledge or skills. For example, in a PSHE lesson, one student was working with worksheets which were too easy for his reading ability. The college recognises that the current curriculum framework does not provide sufficient choice or appropriate challenge for many of these more able learners. Attendance and punctuality is not regularly tracked and recorded. Students' responsibility for time management does not receive sufficient attention from staff. Lateness is not challenged, and registration and break periods do not keep to the stated times.

Quality of education and training

51. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. Where teaching is very good, lessons are well planned and matched to the individual needs of students. In a music lesson, students with a range of complex learning needs demonstrated effective understanding of the concepts of 'stop' and 'start', and 'loud' and 'soft' through the creative use of soundbeam technology. This allows students to control and interact with the music directly and reinforces a sense of spatial awareness. In a sports lesson, students had to listen and respond to instructions in a competitive situation. This led to the development of effective problem-solving skills. The students worked out that it was faster for two of them to go through a hoop together, as opposed to separately, as they would reach the finishing line more quickly.

52. In the less effective lessons, there is an over-reliance on worksheets and a lack of appropriately matched activities and resources to extend the learning of more able students. In some lessons, a narrow range of teaching methods is used and the timing of activities does not always promote effective learning. For example, in one lesson, the teacher continued to use a name game when students had clearly lost interest. In a lesson on behaviour and self-control, most of the time was spent in question and answer on key behaviour words, such as 'please' and 'thank you', rather than on the concepts or reality of their individual responses. The establishment of cross-curricular basic skills goals took precedence over the original lesson plan and students lost interest. In another PSHE lesson, worksheets were used to support all the information and activities despite the availability and range of multi-media resources.

53. Pre-entry assessment is comprehensive and includes multi-disciplinary assessment. All students undertake a three-day assessment which covers a range of subject areas as well as personal, social and behavioural needs. There is a good staff-student ratio. Staff are enthusiastic and demonstrate a clear commitment to continued professional development. Specialist technologies, such as soundbeam, are used effectively to promote learning. Most classrooms are light and airy, but the art room, although attractive, is too small to accommodate some art projects effectively. In addition, there are no easels and no access to computers. The college is addressing these shortcomings through its ILT strategy.

54. Students are involved effectively in the review of their learning and achievements, and progress through a graduated traffic light review system. At the end of each lesson, staff discuss and agree with students the level of their achievement against their individual learning goals. Students challenge and comment on the judgements and there is strong interest and motivation to achieve a 'green' judgement. Individual learning plans are inadequate and simply mirror the schedule and purchase orders. They are not sufficiently detailed and do not adequately identify small steps of learning. Medium-term learning goals are imprecise and there is little indication of students' ability levels and the extent of the development expected. There are inconsistent links to therapy goals and targets. Subject baseline assessments are used to identify individual learning needs and to monitor progress. The quality of these baseline assessments is variable; one baseline assessment is based on school national curriculum targets and is not appropriate for students with learning difficulties. The relationship between the traffic light review system and the use of baseline assessments to track achievement has not yet been agreed or clarified.

55. Transition arrangements for students are satisfactory. The college recognises in its self-

assessment report that structured programmes for transition are underdeveloped. To address this, a Connexions personal advisor attends the college for one day a week. The advisor works with individuals and small groups on the recently introduced PSHE programme. Some individual tutors have visited colleges or future residential placements in order to effectively prepare the student for transition.

56. Students are well supported in all aspects of their lives in college. The effective multi-disciplinary approach has been extended with the introduction of a new art therapy service. This helps students discover an outlet for complex and confusing emotions, and seeks to foster self-awareness and growth. Overall, there is insufficient development of speech and language therapy. The three-way tutorial process between students, key workers and personal tutors promotes good liaison and sharing of information across residencies, care and education. The management of students' challenging behaviour is successful. Good practice strategies have been identified and shared with each student. Staff use this information effectively and consistently to manage inappropriate and challenging behaviour in curriculum and wider learning contexts.

Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Newly appointed managers, in both creative and performing arts, provide clear and enthusiastic leadership. An effective mentoring system supports new staff and staff in new job roles. All staff are involved in the thorough self-assessment process. A significant number of initiatives to improve the quality of the provision are of recent origin and are insufficiently established and evaluated. For example, the identification and sharing of good practice is now done through the monthly co-ordinators' meeting. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory, for example, through the appropriate discussion of gender and cultural issues.