



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Loppington House

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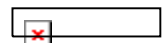
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Basic information about the college



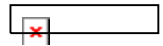
Name of college:

Loppington House

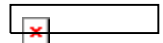
Type of college:	Independent specialist college
Director:	Mr P Harris
Principal:	Mr P Harris
Address of college:	Loppington Nr Wem Shropshire SY4 5NF
Telephone number:	01939 233926
Fax number:	01939 235255
Chair of governors:	N/A
Reference number*:	
Name of reporting inspector:	Diane Stacey
Dates of inspection:	1-5 March 2004

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

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



Loppington House is a privately owned establishment that opened in 1983 as a further education (FE) unit. It was an extension to Shelton House school, which catered for students aged between 8 and 16. The director of Loppington House is also the principal. The establishment is set in extensive grounds in a rural area of Shropshire. Loppington House currently caters for students aged 16 to 25, but from 2004, will only cater for students aged 18 to 25. It also provides residential, occupational and educational facilities for adults over 25, all of whom have previously been students in the FE unit. All students have severe learning difficulties, a range of other disabilities - such as hearing impairment and physical difficulties - and behaviours that challenge.

Students enrol at the FE unit from many areas of the country. In the current academic year, nine students are funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), eight of whom are residential and one a day student. Of these, eight are male and one female. There are two students funded by Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) and the remainder by social services. Loppington House offers provision for either 38 weeks or up to 52 weeks (38 weeks of which are for education). Of the students presently funded by the LSC, one attends in term time only (38 weeks); one attends for 46 weeks; one for 48 weeks; one for 50 weeks; and five for 52 weeks.

The teaching and residential accommodation is mainly within the FE unit. Some additional housing is sited on the campus and there are two further independent houses within the local community.

All LSC-funded students have on individually designed programmes and work towards an award that promotes independence. There are links with a local FE college at which some students in the past have enrolled on a variety of courses. There are plans for current students to be given the opportunity to attend the FE college at later point in their programmes.

The mission statement of the college is 'to offer resources that enable an individual to develop his/her potential for independence and achieve a fulfilled life, the emphasis being on students' needs and ensuring that they will have as much responsibility for their own life as possible. The overall aim is for each student to gain the skills needed to reintegrate into community life'.

How effective is the college?

The college makes satisfactory provision for students with severe learning difficulties, associated disabilities and behaviours that challenge. Teaching is satisfactory overall and approximately one-third of lessons observed was good or better. The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. Students make good progress with the development of their personal and social skills. Residential accommodation is satisfactory. Pre-entry assessment is good. Regular assessments and reviews are used effectively to measure individual students' progress. The range of programmes for students is narrow. There are some inadequate arrangements for specialist support for students.

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

Key strengths

- good progress over time in the acquisition of social and personal skills

- good use of residential facilities to reinforce learning

- comprehensive pre-entry assessments

- effective involvement of students in evaluating their own learning

- good use of community facilities

- good personal support for students.

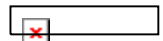
What should be improved

- access to speech and language therapy

- planning for transition

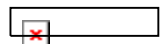
- the application of more formal strategies for behaviour management
- the specialist expertise of staff
- the promotion of equal opportunities across the curriculum
- the rigour of procedures for quality assurance.
- aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in the sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are satisfactory. All senior managers communicate a clear vision for the college. Regular consultation with staff ensures a shared sense of purpose and a universal understanding of the mission. Strategic planning is limited and is mainly short term. There are underdeveloped procedures for quality assurance. In discussion, staff are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the college, but weaknesses, in particular, have not been identified adequately in the self-assessment report. Management information systems lack coherence and do not provide sufficient data to evaluate teaching and learning effectively. Overall, the college's response to the promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. There are no governors, but directors oversee the smooth running of the college. Financial management is sound. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

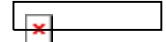
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. The college offers places to disadvantaged students from across the country. Students are included in all activities. Provision is matched to the needs of individuals. Individual care and learning programmes are designed to meet the specific needs of students as identified through appropriate assessment procedures. Good use is made of provision in the local community. There are currently limited opportunities for appropriate supported work experience. Literacy and numeracy are integrated effectively within all areas of the curriculum and are promoted well. The communication needs of students with more complex difficulties are not, however, given sufficient attention. Currently there are no students from minority ethnic groups. The college is sensitive to issues of equality, but does not actively promote

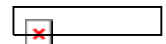
(SENDA) and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 has been slow.

How well are students guided and supported?



Support and guidance for students are satisfactory; personal support is good. Comprehensive and coherent programmes of care and education promote learning. There is effective support from care staff and good access to health professionals. Pre-entry and initial assessments are used effectively to inform students' individual learning plans. There is no student handbook, but a student charter is available in a range of formats. Induction is effective and helps students to settle quickly into college life. Students respond well to the respect and adult ethos that is successfully promoted throughout the college. There are good links with parents and other professionals; informal contact is welcomed. Students do not always receive the specialist support they require. Currently, no students are receiving speech and language therapy. The regularity and rigour of tutorials are inadequate. Whilst students' inappropriate behaviour is regularly challenged by staff, there is uneven application of strategies for behaviour management. The majority of students do not have formally recorded behaviour strategies. An experienced local Connexions personal adviser attends most annual reviews. Planning for leavers' transition is underdeveloped. Loppington House provides satisfactory value for money.

Students' view 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

- staff are good to you

- listening to music

- using the karaoke machine

- gardening and digging

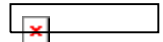
- everything.

What they feel could be improved

- the food

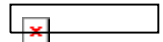
- having to do my ironing.

Other information

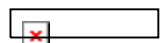


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once the report is published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will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

Part B: The college as a whole

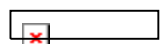


Scope of provision



1. The college designs individual learning plans for each student based on the assessment of their abilities and interests. All students follow the programme for developing essential skills during the day as well as within the care context in the residencies. The college provides a range of activities to develop social and independent living skills and education and to provide care. Independent living skills are taught within the residential flats. Individual leisure programmes are provided by means of local facilities. The education curriculum is provided in life skills, art and craft, rural skills, project work and literacy and numeracy.

Achievement and standards



2. Most students make progress over time in their acquisition of social and personal skills. For example, one student now relates better to his peer group and is less likely to leave the room during lessons. Another student has learnt to feed herself independently. Through good support, students

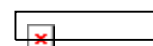
Students achieve good standards of work in practical subjects and leisure activities. Achievements are celebrated by means of a range of displays and through open days. The displays in the art and craft room offer wall-mounted examples of students' work and the photographs in the projects room show students successfully undertaking different activities and leisure pursuits. There are also displays of certificates and achievements in the main foyer. For example, certificates and a cup from Riding for the Disabled for riding progress and dressage and a range of accreditation from the essential skills award for making progress, communication and behaving appropriately.

3. Retention rates on all programmes are good and are comparable with those in this sector. Only one student has left the course over the past three years, due to mental health problems. The college has improved its processes of identifying and recording achievements and now successfully uses a clear framework on which to base the curriculum. The individual learning plans inform effectively the individual learning objectives within lesson plans across all strands of the curriculum.

4. There are good achievements in the programme for developing independence, and satisfactory achievements in literacy and numeracy. While there are good examples of integrating literacy and numeracy within all students' activities, there are also some lost opportunities observed. Students achieve planned objectives to respond to instructions and to develop routines. Students in the residential setting learn in small, carefully planned stages to complete domestic tasks successfully. Students carry out practical activities, such as marmalade-making, with each of the curriculum strand contributing to the whole process. Achievement in communication skills is hampered by the lack of speech and language therapy.

5. Data relating to students' destinations at the end of their course are not available and analysis of trends in achievement and attainment is underdeveloped. Previously, students have automatically made the transition from LSC funding to social services funding and have returned to live in one of the supported residential homes, either on site or within the community. This is no longer possible because of the lack of accommodation available. There is no overall strategy to support students' transition during the final year of funding. Students lack opportunities to develop work-related skills.

Quality of teaching, training and learning



6. Overall, teaching is at least satisfactory and responds to the needs of the individual. There are comprehensive schemes of work in place, all of which have clear aims. Most lessons are planned well and maintain a good pace and students make progress. There are clear objectives for practical activities. Lessons, some of which take place in the residential settings, incorporate a varied range of appropriate learning activities, including an emphasis on decision making. All lesson plans specify individual objectives for each student. Staff know students well and use this knowledge to promote learning. Individual learning objectives are pursued consistently and relate back to individual learning plans and care plans. The same objectives for each individual are prioritised effectively across the curriculum areas; for example, one student was being encouraged to sign 'yes' in every lesson activity. Classroom management is satisfactory. Support staff are managed effectively to assist students' learning.

7. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy are integrated across the curriculum, which enables students to develop individual skills through the range of activities available. For example, in an art and craft lesson, students had to check that they had drawn nine circles with a compass. In a projects lesson, focusing on going to the post office to buy a stamp, students were counting and checking the amount of money successfully. Wherever possible, students are involved in contributing to the in-house Lopp Gossip magazine. Individual learning plans and lesson plans clearly record students' objectives for literacy, numeracy and communication. Literacy and numeracy are successfully assessed on entry and students' progress is regularly reviewed.

8. Individual learning plans focus on the development of independence through the acquisition of individual skills and on literacy and numeracy, but they are not sufficiently detailed. There are, for example, few details recorded about communication needs or strategies for managing behaviour through appropriate interventions. Neither do the individual learning plans identify subject-specific skills adequately. For example, there is limited information about a student's ability to use road safety skills or to tender the correct change whilst shopping. Progress in acquiring such skills is not recorded adequately. However, within the residential environment, tasks are broken down into small stages and this builds up an effective picture of what students are able to do, either with help or by themselves.

9. Despite the focus on individuals, there is a lack of challenge in many lessons and inadequate use of multi-sensory approaches to teaching and learning. The same tasks are applied to all students, irrespective of their ability or need. Some students are insufficiently challenged and others given tasks which are too difficult for them. For example, a student for whom text and symbols were inappropriate, was asked to place a photograph of a fellow student underneath a number on the whiteboard. Behavioural plans and approaches are not in place to inform teaching and learning. Although information about the behaviour of individuals is regularly discussed and staff are aware of the difficulties for particular students, effective written strategies to minimise disruption to learning are not synchronised across the range of activities. For example, when a student was refusing to participate in a lesson, different staff used different strategies: one ignored the student, another tried gentle persuasion, while a third staff member followed the student round the room, trying to get her to remain.

10. The use of Makaton signing is underdeveloped and, where it is used, the skills of staff are often limited. There are, however, some Makaton symbols displayed effectively around the college.

11. In many lessons, there were inadequate numbers of staff available to support the learning of students with more complex needs. For example, in one lesson with seven students and four members of staff, two students were experiencing difficulties, which demanded that they had one to one support at that time. In the better lessons, the availability of an appropriate number of staff enhanced the learning. For example, in an independent living lesson, all students were helped effectively to make sandwiches for their lunch, thus successfully achieving their objectives for the lesson.

12. No staff are qualified teachers and only one member of staff has a specialist qualification in teaching students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are good opportunities for teachers and residential staff to obtain training in behaviour management and training and qualifications to comply with the National Care Standards, appropriate to their job role. Induction of residential and support staff is comprehensive and focused on the awards of the Learning Disability Award Framework. New and existing teaching staff do not receive adequate training in educational methodology and in strategies for teaching students with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching staff do not sufficiently understand the impact that the students' disability has on their learning. All staff receive regular and well-structured appraisals and supervision, and their training needs are then used to inform the comprehensive care training plan.

13. Teaching accommodation and the extensive grounds are accessible to students, with ramped access where necessary. All the LSC-funded students live in accommodation on the first floor of the main building. Residential facilities for students are satisfactory; all students are encouraged to personalise their rooms. The teaching accommodation and learning environments are good, rooms are light and most have students' work displayed. The projects room, which also serves as an information and communication technology (ICT) room, is well resourced but is the only area where students have access to the Internet. All teaching areas, except for the rural studies room, have a computer. Access to some rooms is unsatisfactory. For example, to get to the life skills room, staff and students have to walk through the rural studies room. This is very distracting for students when lessons are in progress. Insufficient use is made of aids to support learning through technology and adapted equipment, such as electric scissors or switches to further students' independence. Staff and students are very aware of issues of health and safety and reporting procedures are effective. A comprehensive process of risk assessment takes account of the diverse and complex needs of all students. Both individual and generic risk assessments are well established and all staff are familiar

with these processes. All risk assessments are reviewed effectively at least once a year and more frequently, if required. Serious incidents are recorded, analysed well, evaluated and used successfully to inform future improvements. College transport is available to take students into the local community, but this resource is under-used in the evenings and at weekends. There is often a lack of suitable drivers.

14. Pre-entry assessment is comprehensive and incorporates observations of students within their home educational environment. Good emphasis is placed on students' prior attainment and there are contributions from a range of multidisciplinary reports, such as those of speech and language therapists and psychiatrists. However, once at the college, there is insufficient ongoing assessment and support of speech and language therapy. Wherever possible, the college invites students to attend, prior to enrolment, for a programme of half days, as part of a planned process of entry. Baseline assessments take place over the first term and include the identification of literacy and numeracy needs. The results of these assessments are used effectively to inform individual learning plans and students' curriculum and care programmes.

15. The processes to review students' progress are good. Individual learning objectives are applied consistently and used to inform reviews of students' progress at all stages. Good attention is paid to the assessments of students' literacy and numeracy skills, which are included within lessons plans and reviewed alongside students' objectives for the curriculum areas. Good recording of students' daily progress is shared between the education and care staff. Each student owns a report book, which is completed with the student by education staff during the day and taken back to the residences for care staff to record achievements and issues in the evenings.

16. Parents, carers and other interested parties are regularly informed of students' progress. As well as receiving formal reviews, they also receive regular information about the college and students' achievements and activities through the in-house magazine.

17. Each student has an individual timetable. LSC-funded students work alongside the older students and both groups participate in similar educational activities. Self-advocacy is promoted well and a student self-advocacy group meets regularly. Students' views are successfully gathered through this process. Students also have access to external advocates, if needed.

18. The use of practical activities as a basis for learning provides opportunities for students to develop and practise their skills in realistic contexts. Learning is supported well and reinforced through the extended curriculum. When appropriate, students are involved in reviewing their own learning. Individual programmes of work are not adequately demanding for all students. The more able students do not have appropriate access to a range of programmes at entry level 3. Some lessons were not sufficiently matched to students' individual needs.

19. Transition into the college is good, but there is insufficient attention given to preparing the students to move on to the next phase of their life. Progression routes are not adequately identified sufficiently early in the students' programme. The college has good facilities, such as a workshop and a shop in the local town, but these are used only for students aged over 25. Good links have been established with the local FE college and plans are in place for current students to attend this provision later in their programmes. There are limited opportunities for students to take part in work experience and many missed opportunities to develop work-related skills on site. Community facilities are successfully used to support the transition to adult life and, where appropriate, independent living. All students spend at least one day a week learning in the community. Teaching activities regularly include visits to shops, cafes, the library, leisure centre and post office. Activities are planned carefully. For example, students were visiting the post office so that they could withdraw money to use on a trip out the following day. Students' involvement in a range of enrichment activities is satisfactory. Activities include shopping, an art and craft club, a computer club, and going to the local pub, pool, restaurants, cinema and bowling. The residential accommodation provides realistic and suitable learning environments to practise skills for independent living in context. Whenever possible, students assume gradual responsibility for washing their own clothes and all are given more responsibility as their competencies improve.

20. Support for students is satisfactory. Tutors, support and care staff communicate effectively to

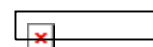
support and promote students' learning. Induction into the college works well and helps students to settle quickly into college life. A comprehensive range of information is available for students and their families. There is a students' charter, available in a range of formats. The coherent and comprehensive care management plans are reviewed and updated regularly, and are successfully linked to individual learning plans. Both provide an effective framework for monitoring and evaluating most students' needs. Support for students with complex communication difficulties is inadequate. Staff working with these students lack specialist advice and guidance to help them to develop appropriate programmes and strategies.

21. The college provides a supportive community and most students know where to go if they need help, both with their studies and with personal matters. Staff regularly reinforce students' personal dignity and respect and students respond well to the adult ethos and good relationships they have with staff. Students are enabled to develop their personal care skills and many are making significant progress towards this aspect of independence.

22. All students have good access to community health provision, which includes mental health services. Other services available for students include access to a dietician, a consultant psychiatrist, the local doctor, a registered nurse, a music therapist and a counsellor. The counsellor provides a useful service for students, especially regarding issues about relationships and sexuality. Careers education and guidance are underdeveloped. Insufficient attention is given to preparing students for moving on to the next stage of their life and for exploring the opportunities that may be available to them at the end of their programme. Education tutors summarise students' progress for parents, students and Connexions personal advisers, for review purposes. The college provides parents, funding bodies and external agencies with reports on students' progress at least annually, and more often when requested. Reports contain detailed and helpful information. Most annual review meetings are attended by the local Connexions personal adviser and involve a wide range of staff so that issues of concern can be dealt with swiftly. Students' attendance is good and is analysed well to identify trends and bring about improvements. Punctuality is promoted successfully and students were on time for all their lessons during the inspection week.

23. Tutorials, involving care tutors, education tutors and individual students, are in place but they lack rigour. Tutorials do not occur with sufficient regularity and there are lost opportunities to enable students to make sense of their programme, understand their progress and plan for the future. Whilst support and guidance are generally sensitive to issues of equality of opportunity, such issues are not promoted sufficiently throughout the curriculum. Gender stereotypes are challenged effectively, however.

Leadership and management



24. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The aims and mission of the college are understood well and promoted effectively by the senior management team. The ethos of the college promotes a shared sense of mission and purpose, which permeates the provision. Senior managers provide clear direction, and teamwork is promoted very well. The college has experienced significant change since the last inspection and curriculum and staffing structures have been revised. Many of the staff involved in teaching are fairly new to their posts.

25. A good range of comprehensive policies and procedures are in place. These are reviewed annually and include effective procedures to eliminate bullying and harassment. Students are made aware of the complaints process and know whom to consult if they have a problem. All staff are familiar with policies and procedures and are expected to sign to indicate that they have read and understood them. Policies and procedures are effective in ensuring the health and safety of students, and comprehensive risk assessments, both generic and in relation to individual students, are in place and implemented fully.

26. Management information systems are effective in providing administrative information for staff. Information about students' educational achievements and destinations is not coherently maintained, however. The current system does not easily enable managers to monitor and evaluate achievements and progress or use this information to plan improvements.

27. Staff are actively involved in the self-assessment process. However, self-assessment and development planning lack rigour. The self-assessment report does not adequately identify key strengths and weaknesses to support action planning. Appraisal of staff is good and implemented in such a way that staff performance can improve. All staff have an annual appraisal, a six-monthly review and are supervised every two months. Individual staff development needs are successfully identified and feed into the comprehensive staff training plan. However, this plan is mainly focused on meeting the care needs of the students. Support staff all undergo induction according to the Learning Disability Award Framework to comply with National Care Standards. Whilst all new staff are mentored during their induction period, teaching staff do not have adequate induction for their responsibilities. Most staff currently involved in teaching have developed their skills over time and were originally members of the care team. The college has been successful in achieving and maintaining the Investors in People award over the past five years.

28. Strategic planning is underdeveloped. Few targets are set for achievement, progression and transition, and those that are set are insufficiently demanding. There is limited evaluation of aims and objectives to inform managers and staff for future planning. Quality assurance processes are underdeveloped. A regular and well-established system of lesson observations is in place, but the outcomes are not evaluated sufficiently nor used to bring about improvements. The college has recently started to collate a wide range of information, including feedback from students, staff, parents and carers. However, this is not yet analysed effectively to monitor trends and to identify actions for improvement. The student advocacy group successfully discusses issues affecting students.

29. There is insufficient promotion of, and limited attention given to, equal opportunities within the curriculum. Students' awareness of different and diverse backgrounds and cultures is limited. The college's equal opportunities policy does not refer to the relevant legislation nor is it reviewed regularly. The college has yet to carry out its regulatory duties in relation to the SENDA Part 4. It has not yet completed a race equality policy, premises audit or action plan to implement its obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The college's response to legislation regarding child protection is adequate.

30. There are no governors, but directors successfully oversee the smooth running of the college. Financial management is effective, with a detailed projected cash flow for all areas of the college, including a monthly forecast for staff training. Small budgets are allocated for student activities across care and education. Loppington House provides satisfactory value for money.