



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy

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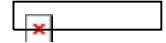
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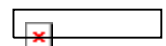
Basic information about the college



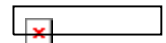
Name of college:	The Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy
Type of college:	Specialist, residential, independent
Director:	Mrs Jennifer Dixon-Clegg
Principal:	Mrs Jennifer Dixon-Clegg
Address of college:	Avon Tyrrell Bransgore Christchurch Dorset BH23 8EE
Telephone number:	01425 673 297
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Chair of governors:	The Hon. Mrs P C Baillie
Reference number*:	1045352
Name of reporting inspector:	Joyce Deere
Dates of inspection:	9-13 February 2004
Business Name and Number:	3031713

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

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

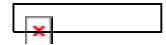


The Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy, founded in 1976, is an independent, residential, specialist college situated in the New Forest, Hampshire. The college has two sites which are within a five-mile radius of Avon Tyrrell, near Christchurch. The college is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. The principal reports to the board of directors, who oversee the centre. The centre provides for young people aged between 16 and 25 who have moderate learning difficulties. A quarter of the students have challenging behaviour or mental health needs and a few students have autistic spectrum disorders. There are 37 students in residence, 35 of whom are funded by the LSC. Of the students, 32 are female and 1 is from a mixed-race background. There are 16 students aged 19 and over. The college's mission is to enable students to relate more successfully to others and to have more control over their own lives. The core of the college's work is using horses as the medium to enable young people to learn and develop.

The college provides a three-year residential course, Further Education Through Horsemastership. There are 6 students in the third year of the course, which is being offered for the first time in the current academic year. According to ability and need, students work towards the national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 1 in horse care, the British Horse Society (BHS) stage 1 examination, BHS riding & road safety test, the Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy (remedial) vaulting awards and the Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy riding and stable management certification. All students follow a social and life skills award, and may take literacy and numeracy qualifications at entry level or level 1.

The college offers a learning environment for young people with disabilities who are motivated by being with horses. The curriculum is built around this experience. Social and independent living skills are taught both through the contact with horses and in the residences. Literacy, numeracy and communications are integrated into these activities. Students are taught throughout the week in small groups and take full responsibility for the care of the horses. Time each week is spent on developing daily living skills, studying personal and health issues and visiting the local community.

How effective is the college?



The quality of teaching and learning in equine studies and in social and independent living skills is good. The quality of teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy is unsatisfactory. The use of horses as the medium for learning is innovative and very successful. The standard of specialist support for students is high, as are the standards of residential care and support for students.

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

Key strengths

- very effective communication of the main aims and ethos

- an innovative and stimulating horse-based curriculum

- good specialist support

- high standards of horse care

- good development of social and interpersonal skills

- effective use of the residential setting to consolidate learning

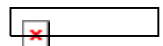
- good personal support for students.

What should be improved

- the effectiveness of assessment and recording of learning
- the quality of literacy and numeracy provision
- the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for learning
- the quality assurance procedures
- the promotion of aspects of equality of opportunity.

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
Equine studies	Good. Students produce high standards of stable-management work, and the teaching and learning of personal skills as part of the day-to-day management and care of horses are good. The use of horses as the basis for learning is very effective. The specialist support, particularly through physiotherapy, is good. However, a few of the more able students do not always develop their riding skills sufficiently and the recording of progress in practical equine skills is insufficient.
Social and independent living skills	Good. Students make significant progress in developing their social skills and their daily living skills. The use of the horse environment to develop these skills is innovative. There are seamless links between

	the daytime curriculum and the residential aspects of students' experience, and the students have good support at all times. Staff do not always understand how to set effective targets and do not make sufficient use of the pre-entry assessment in planning.
Literacy, numeracy and communications	Unsatisfactory. Students develop their speaking and listening skills well, but the development of literacy skills and higher level numeracy skills is inadequate. Too much teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Good use is made of the practical environment to develop basic level numeracy skills, but the arrangements for assessment are unsatisfactory. The academic tutorials that provide individual support for students are newly in place and are not yet working effectively.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership by the director is good and inspires a strong ethos based on the benefits of learning through horses. Support from heads of departments ensures there is smooth day-to-day operational management of the provision. There is insufficient formal development planning. Communication and teamwork across the college are good. Quality assurance procedures have improved but are not yet well developed. Aspects of equal opportunities are not sufficiently promoted. Trustees provide a clear direction for the college and are largely effective in overseeing the provision. Financial management is satisfactory. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

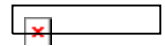
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory. The college caters very well for a diverse group of students. Students attend the provision from across the United Kingdom and mainland Europe. They come from a very broad and varied range of social backgrounds. All students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and many have behavioural needs. The initial assessment procedure is thorough and great care is taken to make sure that the college can meet the needs of individual students. Five students are male and very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This is in line with the national situation in equine studies in colleges. The college makes good use of the local community for learning. In so doing, it promotes disability positively to a wider group within the local area and helps prepare its students for life in the community. The use of specialist physiotherapy through horsemastership is a significant strength of the college. However, the college does not actively monitor and promote equality of opportunity sufficiently. It has been slow in responding to the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The college's provision for literacy and numeracy needs further development.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

riding horses is used to improve physical strength and agility. Specialist staff work well with all other staff to support students effectively. Good attention is paid to all aspects of students' health and wellbeing. The pre-entry assessment and induction of students is rigorous, and makes good use of the multi-disciplinary team to ensure the needs of students are identified. Information and advice given to students and parents/carers at the application stage is good. Personal support for students is good. Links with the local Connexions partnership and other specialist agencies are effective. The preparation for transition from the college is rigorous, and the contact and communication with parents or carers is very good.

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

- working with horses

- being able to canter

- learning to vault

- meeting lots of other people

- the staff

- the food

- being good at something

- sharing a room with a friend

- shopping

- losing weight and feeling healthy
- work experience.

What they feel could be improved

- the number of teaching rooms
- having to go to bed early
- more time to watch TV
- more room to dry coats.

Other information

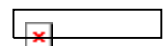
The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring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

Part B: The college as a whole

Achievement and standards

1. There are no differences in standards between the provision for students aged 16 to 18 those aged 19 and over. Students of all ages are taught together in small groups based on social and emotional needs and group dynamics.
2. Achievement of awards and accredited courses in equine studies is satisfactory. About 20% of students took external awards of NVQ level 1 in horse care and/or the BHS stage 1 award in 2002/03. Over half of the students achieved the full award with all the others partially achieving the award. Data held on students' achievement of internal awards are not reliable.
3. Standards of work in independent living skills and in social skills are high. Staff have high expectations of students, who demonstrate good skills. For example, one student was able to ask an assistant in a health shop to identify the fat content of a potential purchase. Progress in relation to the development of independent travel is particularly good. The horses are used very effectively to help students to become more disciplined and to take responsibility. Students demonstrate good social skills such as being polite, taking turns and contributing to group discussions. They develop good speaking and listening skills by working as teams throughout the week.
4. Standards of work are high in stable management. Each group of students looks after one of the four sections of the yard on a daily basis. Their work produces high standards of orderliness and horse care. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of correct techniques for the main horse husbandry tasks, including mucking out, feeding and grooming. Standards of work are not as good in riding, where the most able students are not sufficiently challenged.
5. Retention rates are high, averaging above 97% over the past three years, in line with other specialist colleges. During the week of inspection, the attendance rate was 98%.
6. Students are satisfactorily prepared for further participation in learning or the community. Of the 35 students who left over the past 3 years, all except 2 have gone on to further training in further education (FE), or to residential establishments where they work or learn in a rural setting. The college has introduced a third year to allow students more time to prepare for moving on from the college.

Quality of teaching, training and learning



7. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with examples of good or very good teaching as well as unsatisfactory teaching in all areas of the curriculum. Much of the teaching is good in equine studies. The use of students' interest in horses as the basis of the curriculum is very effective. Students learn how to work in groups, how to take turns and how to speak and behave appropriately. For the first time in their lives, many students have significant responsibility for the welfare of another, and they respond well to this challenge. The atmosphere in the yard is one where all students are engaged and active, even in inclement weather. Their skills are further developed as they improve skills of independence and daily living through activities such as money management and daily life in the residences. However, mounted sessions are less successful and instructions about preparation for transitions or position improvements are often insufficiently detailed and do not give the more able students enough opportunities to improve their performance.
8. The teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy are not always satisfactory. There is not sufficient emphasis on the development of these skills beyond very basic daily occurrences in the stable yard or residences: this rarely requires anything above basic counting and elementary fractions or sight words, and many students are capable of more than this. The individual academic tutorials that have recently been developed to provide support are proving successful, but they need further development. Teachers have difficulty understanding students' problems with basic literacy.

They sometimes suggest inappropriate reading strategies to students, such as sounding out phonically irregular words. Students may be asked to read aloud before having time to familiarise themselves with what they are reading.

9. The college has made significant improvements to its accommodation since the previous inspection. The main residential site has been fully refurbished and upgraded. Bathroom and laundry facilities have been improved. The five double rooms all have en-suite facilities, as do six of the single rooms. The facilities are now more appropriate for the development of independent living skills. The health and safety policy is well implemented, and detailed individual risk assessments are completed. Health and safety in the stables and yards are constantly checked, and areas of concern are swiftly dealt with. Generally, staff and students are mindful of health and safety issues, although inspectors found minor examples that needed attention. The college meets the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) standards.

10. The core teaching resource, the horses, is a significant strength. They are well matched to the needs of students. Yard management is good and there are good facilities for students. Teaching space for theory work is satisfactory, although classroom space and the space used for individual sessions are not always suitable. Students do not have sufficient opportunity to develop computer skills.

11. All staff who work with students are 'horse motivated' and many have BHS qualifications. Fewer than half of those teaching have general teaching qualifications. The head of residential provision is working towards NVQ level 4 in care and three other members of staff are working towards NVQ level 3. No member of staff has specialist qualifications, and only one has a qualification in teaching literacy and numeracy. All staff receive an introduction to disability at the induction.

12. Pre-entry and initial assessments are comprehensive and thorough. The college carries out a comprehensive review of information provided by the students and their parents, and also takes account of assessment information provided by referring agencies. During seven days of residence at the college, the student joins the existing cohorts of students and works and lives with them. A multi-disciplinary team assesses personal development, independent living skills, care and support requirements, vocational motivation and competence in literacy and numeracy. Although this initial assessment is good overall, the assessment of students' literacy and numeracy is not effective. Tasks observed are not appropriate for assessing skills. The college is aware of this and has recently piloted more appropriate assessments.

13. Other aspects of assessment are not satisfactory. The baseline assessment, developed during the first term, is not as rigorous as the initial assessment in identifying areas for improvement and has become somewhat cumbersome for staff. The targets subsequently used for the learning plans are not always the most appropriate for students. Where they are least successful, they are too general with an over-emphasis on non-specific aims that lose sight of areas of improvement in vocational areas. Progress is recorded at the end of each lesson, and tracking sheets are used to summarise the outcomes of lessons on a weekly basis. These records are conscientiously completed, but do not sufficiently show what students have learnt. However, the formal reviews that are carried out each term are thorough and detailed, and include aspects of vocational progress which are not included in lesson plans and evaluations. It is not always easy to track the progress students have made since starting the course. Students are not sufficiently involved in self-evaluation or peer-evaluation during lessons. The verification processes for the accredited provision are sound. The internal and external moderators' reports are satisfactory. However, for most students, assessment towards the completion of NVQs in horse care is slow.

14. The focus on horses as the medium for learning is a significant strength. It captures students' enthusiasm and provides good motivation for learning. The college carefully selects students who will benefit from this approach and the curriculum is well matched to students' interests and needs. The seamless nature of the formal taught curriculum and the residential experience enables students to make significant progress in many areas. The staff and students work in teams, both on the formal curriculum and in the residences, so that there is consistency and continuity for the students. This use of team working is particularly effective.

15. The emphasis in the curriculum on behavioural targets is not helpful for all students. The introduction of a social and life skills award as the central means of developing and recording targets has resulted in a diminution of focus on vocational skills, and the vocational and literacy and numeracy needs of the more able students are not always met. The college has very recently piloted a model for developing students' literacy and numeracy skills. This is showing signs of success, but has yet to be used effectively for all students.

16. The activities in students' leisure time are satisfactory. In addition to activities such as using the local gym and swimming, the programme of enrichment visits includes opportunities for students to demonstrate their vaulting skills at external events. Students make use of local services and venues including youth clubs, theatres and local pubs. They also organise bazaars and outside events at the college.

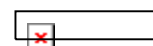
17. Students' transition is well managed. A particularly effective feature is a two-day residential event, where parents or staff from relevant external agencies observe students during the working day and participate in activities. Students in the final term follow a programme of preparation for moving on. The staff work hard to find appropriate work experience for students, but currently it is not sufficient. Students rarely spend more than a day in a placement, which does not provide sufficient time for them to benefit from the experience. However, although much of the preparation for transition is good, aspects of equal opportunities are underdeveloped. Procedures to address issues of race, gender and sexuality are not planned, although the college does provide sensitive support where specific needs arise.

18. Support and guidance for students are very good. Staff take care to ensure that the college can support students appropriately and refers them elsewhere if it is felt that their needs cannot be met within the college. Guidance relating to career progression and transition is structured well. Group tutors have effective links with outside agencies and close contact with social services relating to personal support. Liaison with the local Connexions partnership is productive and much effort goes into keeping contact with students' home support agencies. Induction of students is thorough.

19. Students receive good specialist support from a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, nurses and two members of staff with counselling qualifications. For specialist, confidential counselling, students are referred to external agencies. Specialist staff are integrated effectively into the curriculum as teachers as well as specialist advisers. The occupational therapist, for example, is also a group teacher for the third-year students. The physiotherapist advises staff on aspects of posture in riding to ensure that students benefit fully from the physical experience of riding. There is good communication amongst staff, which ensures that there is a quick and effective response to any concerns or issues relating to students' needs.

20. Personal support for students is good. Students have a group tutorial, which focuses effectively on team issues and concerns about the course. They also have effective individual tutorials to discuss more personal issues. The system of teamworking means that staff know students well, and they offer consistently good support across the curriculum. Contact with students' parents or carers is good.

Leadership and management



21. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership by the director is good. The philosophy upon which the entire work of the college is based involves developing students' learning through working with horses. This is a pioneering approach upon which the director's belief and enthusiasm inspires all staff and students. As a result, an ethos of high expectations and teamwork is successfully created.

22. The director is well supported by the heads of department, who have responsibility for the

operational management of the college. Communication across the sites is good. A regular series of frequent meetings keeps all staff involved and up to date. Induction of new staff is effective. They are provided with initial training about working with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and about important college procedures. The quality of teamwork throughout the college ensures there is good ongoing support both for new and experienced staff.

23. The initial assessment procedure is thorough and fair in only recruiting students who will benefit from the college's approach to learning. However, the college does not pay sufficient attention to meeting the distinct needs of the small group of male students, for example, with sex education. In addition, the college has not yet reviewed its policy to require all students to agree not to form exclusive relationships with another student, in light of its increase in students aged 19 years and over. This policy is inappropriate for adult students. The college has been slow in meeting the requirements of SENDA and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). For example, it has only very recently begun to seek information about students' ethnicity against which it can monitor the effectiveness of its provision.

24. Whilst there has been improvement in quality assurance since the previous inspection, procedures remain insufficiently rigorous. The daily staff updates, contributed to by all staff, provide detailed, up-to-date information about each student. These updates are circulated to all departments and are read by staff and managers. The director is alerted immediately if anything is of concern. Any necessary follow-up action is taken promptly. These notes enable the heads of department to monitor each student's wellbeing. However, the weakness in the assessment and recording of students' achievements leads to inadequacies in data on students, and restricts the detailed understanding of how well each student is learning. Formal lesson observations started at the beginning of the academic year and were developed out of staff development exercises. Many of the observations are helpful, focus on the quality of teaching and learning and identify areas for staff to improve. However, few focus sufficiently on what students have learned, in contrast to reporting what activities they have completed. There is no implementation plan for the observation schedule. A recent development is the establishment of a quality assurance group which meets every half-term, and has begun to focus on the consistency with which important aspects of the provision are undertaken, for example, the need to undertake a rolling review of important college policies. However, these developments are at an early stage and have not yet led to improvement. The college has also rightly identified the need to develop a more formal approach to staff appraisal or review, informed by lesson observations.

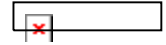
25. The self-assessment process involved all staff and the report largely reflects the strengths and weaknesses found by inspection. A few weaknesses are not identified and the significance of those that are identified is underestimated. A few strengths are overstated. The report is of limited value as a starting point for planning for improvement because the evidence upon which it is based is scant. There has been insufficient action to address a few areas of weakness in the action plan from the previous inspection, including the development of ICT for learning, and assessment in literacy and numeracy provision.

26. The trustees are effective at contributing to shaping the direction of the college. The joint meetings with senior staff have been valuable in considering the future of the college, for example, in agreeing and planning for the development of a third year of the Further Education Through Horsemastership course. These meetings have also established the strategic priorities for the next three years. However, there are no detailed plans to ensure these aims will be achieved. Similarly there are no formal plans for tackling the weaknesses identified within the college's self-assessment report. The trustees monitor much of the work of the college through reports provided by the director and from visits to the different sites, including by talking to students over lunch. However, they do not receive detailed information about students' learning, nor do they always receive sufficiently timely and detailed financial information to keep them fully up to date and informed. The trustees contribute significant knowledge and experience to the benefit of the college, for example, in legal and financial matters. They have been particularly effective in fundraising for capital projects, for example, the improvement in the residential accommodation.

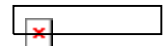
27. Financial management is sound. Improved management of the day-to-day budget has ensured that the college has remained within its overall budget. This is the first time this has been achieved.

Good regard is paid to ensure the college gets the best value, with routine research into comparative costs before purchase. The students receive the support identified on the schedule and purchase orders, and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Equine studies



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

Strengths

- high standards of stable-management work

- good teaching of personal development

- good equine resources

- innovative curriculum to meet students' needs

- good specialist support.

Weaknesses

- insufficient skill development for the more able students in mounted sessions

- insufficient monitoring of progress and achievement in practical equine skills.

Scope of provision

28. All 37 students take the Further Education Through Horsemastership course. Students in their

first and second years live at a converted farm five miles from the Avon Tyrrell site and travel to the centre daily. Those in the third year live at the main teaching site. All students take the internal awards devised by the college in horse care, riding and vaulting. Students may also take NVQ level 1 in horse care and the BHS stage 1. qualification.

Achievement and standards

29. Good work is produced by students on the stable yard. Each group of students looks after one of the four sections of the yard on a daily basis. They have high standards of orderliness and horse care. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of correct techniques for the main horse husbandry tasks, including mucking out, feeding and grooming. The welfare of horses is prioritised in the teaching of yard routines and is used to promote awareness and improved levels of personal care in students. Students' ability to work with others is increased through combined efforts to complete yard work thoroughly and in line with set timescales.

30. All students ride daily and almost all improve in physical fitness, balance, spatial awareness and co-ordination. Several students, with almost no prior riding experience combined with low levels of physical fitness and self-confidence, have made significant progress in riding during the first half of the academic year. A few of the more capable students make slow progress in improving their performance in riding, and learning targets established for them are insufficiently challenging.

31. The achievement of awards and qualifications is satisfactory. A three-tier, colour-coded system of internal awards has been devised by the college in riding, vaulting and stable management. Data held on students' achievement of these awards are not reliable. Records suggest that the majority of students achieve well in the blue first level awards in their first year. Nearly all progress to achieve the next level of red awards and a much smaller proportion achieve the highest level green awards. About 20% of the students took external awards of either NVQ level 1 in horse care and/or the BHS stage 1 exam in 2002/03 and over half achieved the full award, with all of the others partially achieving the award. Over 80% of the students are currently entered for NVQ level 1 in horse care.

32. Students are punctual, with full attendance at most classes. Retention rates are high. All the students in the current academic year have been retained.

Quality of education and training

33. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching of personal development, using the horse as a medium for learning, is done particularly well. In the best lessons, teachers make effective use of many situations that occur within the learning of equestrian skills to teach transferable skills such as communication, relating to others and concepts of direction and travel. The well-managed routine of the equestrian unit reinforces many of the key teaching points that form part of students' individual learning objectives. For example, students prepare feeds to strict timescales to fit in with the daily timetable for feeding, and they work together to ensure all the horses are fed quickly and do not get unsettled. Vaulting, using horses, is particularly effective. Each session comprises of four activities: vaulting using a horse fitted with a vaulting roller and lungeing equipment; rhythm work, using a second lunge horse; gymnastic work doing warm-up floor exercises; and vaulting preparatory work using a gym barrel, with appropriate equipment including colour-coded bandages to aid with identification of leg sequence and rhythm. These combined activities provide many valuable learning opportunities for students, both in terms of improvement of riding skills as well as personal development.

34. Where teaching and learning are less effective, insufficient structure and ineffective team teaching results in unproductive parts of lessons. In a few stable-management lessons, students finished tasks early and were not directed sufficiently to make the most of the time available. In mounted sessions, students often stand idle for periods of time whilst others work individually. Whilst most demonstrations are clear, a few are too brief and unimaginative in approach. Recap of prior learning is neglected in a few lessons.

35. In mounted sessions, commands are clear and most are given in a timely way. Many, mostly

appropriate, links are made between work with horses and personal development. In many lessons, one or two of the more able students make too little progress in developing riding skills and are insufficiently challenged. Instructions about preparation for transitions or position improvements are often insufficiently detailed and do not give the more able students enough opportunities to improve their performance. In a riding session, several capable riders worked on the same exercises as others who were less capable, with no differentiation made in the level of instruction or expectation. Little advice is given on how to improve riding technique, for example, in encouraging horses to bend more correctly through turns or the use of the rider's position to influence the balance and control of the horse. Corrections to the length of riders' stirrups and twists in reins are not consistently given.

36. Whilst there is a well-embedded health and safety code of practice, in a few lessons, health and safety points are insufficiently reinforced. Examples of this include careless disposal of water over the stable yard, some unsafe practice when turning out and catching horses, and students waving a riding whip to point out direction markers when riding.

37. Equine resources are well managed. A highly suitable range of horses are used for flatwork and jumping lessons, vaulting and hacking out. Most horses have good movement and a placid nature and adapt well to the less experienced riders. A few horses, capable of performance at a higher level, are used effectively for the more able riders, including a horse working at medium level in dressage. Three specially trained horses take part in vaulting sessions.

38. Riding areas are safe and well maintained. Additions, such as well-placed mirrors and markers to indicate dimensions and directions in the indoor school, enable students to develop independent riding skills more easily. Group teachers liaise closely with the yard manager to agree allocations of horses for riding. Whilst the selection of horses works well in most cases, occasional mismatches occur.

39. Little use is made of ICT. A reasonable number of videos are available in the library, but opportunities to watch them are limited. Riders are rarely videoed, nor are photographs used to record and improve performance of skills.

40. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Learning objectives for personal development are evaluated at the end of each session and are shared with the students. Whilst some learning objectives make reference to equine work, they are often very broad. Students assess their own progress during tutorials and after lessons. There is underdeveloped use of self-assessment or peer-assessment during practical lessons.

41. Monitoring and recording of progress in equine vocational skills are insufficient. Detailed baseline assessments are used to identify the vocational starting point for each student along with the seven-day initial assessment report. Sometimes, these are done too late in the first term or not dated at all. Progress is not regularly noted against baseline assessments for all students despite the fact that most have made progress. Students keep few records to show the progress they make. Termly reports are detailed and include a summary of progress. Progress towards the completion of assessments for NVQs is slow for many students.

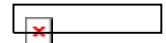
42. The Further Education Through Horsemastership course is well designed and meets the needs of the students in terms of developing their personal skills. The curriculum includes well-designed internal awards for riding, horse care and vaulting, and is tailored to meet both personal development and equine vocational skill outcomes. External accreditation, through NVQ level 1 in horse care and BHS qualifications, is available for individual students who are capable of achieving them. Enrichment activities include horse-related visits to events such as the Badminton Horse Trials. Well-managed work experience is arranged for most students using contacts with a local livery yard and other suitable venues, although this is often of short duration. A few students progress to employment or FE in the equine vocational area. Whilst there are low numbers of male students on the course, this profile matches the national average for the equine sector. The college has plans to recruit actively from non-traditional student groups, including males and those from minority ethnic groups.

43. Significant specialist support is available to students. A part-time physiotherapist, who specialises in riding therapy, undertakes initial assessments of students and advises staff on suitable exercises to include in lessons to help with physical problems. Staff who teach equine studies are knowledgeable about the use of appropriate exercises and use these effectively before appropriate lessons. Additional support, including an emphasis on improving students' physical fitness through regular exercise - the use of a treadmill as well as the physical work involved in equestrian activities - is used widely and has a substantial impact on many students. Staff work well as role models for students as many are active in the horse world.

Leadership and management

44. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff understand and explain the mission and values of the college effectively. Staff teams work well together and regular meetings are held to update them on current issues and individual students. The college adopts an inclusive approach by accepting students from a wide range of vocational abilities. Male and female students integrate well together and work collaboratively. Insufficient observation and critique of vocational skills teaching takes place and some of the more able students do not achieve their full potential. Inconsistencies in monitoring progress in vocational skills result in patchy quality assurance procedures which do not always lead to improvements. The self-assessment report over-emphasises some strengths and makes little reference to the development of equine skills. Data-recording systems are underdeveloped and do not yet provide a reliable evidence base for analysis.

Social and independent living skills



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

Strengths

- good development of social skills
- high standards of work in everyday living skills
- innovative curriculum
- very good links between the day curriculum and the extended curriculum
- good support for students.

Weaknesses

- insufficient understanding of effective target setting

- insufficient use of pre-entry assessment.

Scope of provision

45. The college offers a formal and informal programme of social and independent living skills to all students. The programme includes routines associated with the care and management of horses, the development of daily living skills in the residences and the local community and work experience. The curriculum includes personal hygiene, responsibility, money management, independent travel, presentation, the care of belongings, exercise and fitness, appropriate behaviour, domestic skills and leisure. There is an opportunity to recognise achievement through an award in social and life skills.

Achievement and standards

46. Students' work in independent living skills is generally of a high standard. They acquire and consistently use basic routines related to everyday tasks, demonstrating good progress in domestic skills and personal care. For example, one student was able to ask an assistant in a health shop to identify the fat content of a potential purchase. Students' development of skills in independent travel are particularly good. They also acquire good practical skills when managing horses and demonstrate their ability to manage themselves and to take increased responsibility.

47. Students develop good social skills. They work co-operatively together in their learning groups, and treat others with respect and courtesy. They make significant progress in skills such as interacting during meals and in being clear what they want when in shops.

48. Attendance is good. However, although students make good progress, it is not always possible to capture the true extent of the distance travelled by each student because the starting point is not recorded sufficiently clearly.

Quality of education and training

49. In many lessons, teaching and learning are good or better, although not all teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best teaching and learning take place in practical situations, where students learn daily living skills and develop an understanding of issues such as the need for routine care and cleanliness. Students work in small groups, and lesson planning caters for individual needs. Students learn to manage their own behaviour effectively in lessons, both in the college and in the community. Teachers organise groups and individuals well, creating opportunities for team work. In the least effective lessons, learning is not sufficiently contextualised to allow students to make the connection between what they are doing and how it will contribute to their long-term objectives.

50. Working with horses provides an effective medium for personal and social learning, as well as for acquiring vocational skills in a realistic working environment. Parallels are made between the care of horses and students' personal care and hygiene. There are good opportunities to work independently and collaboratively, and to develop basic skills such as mixing feed and weighing hay. Residential accommodation is suitable and safe and is used effectively to develop students' skills. In the third year, students take increased responsibility for preparing meals, shopping, laundry and cleaning, and the majority work to a good standard. However, all students have too few structured opportunities to use ICT for learning.

51. Staff in the residences have appropriate qualifications and experience, and students have sufficient access to occupational therapy and physiotherapy. Not all teaching staff have appropriate teaching qualifications.

52. Pre-entry assessment is detailed and thorough. However, the link between pre-entry and

baseline assessment and individual learning plans is not clear. Baseline assessments do not provide a sufficiently clear picture of the skills the students had prior to entering the college and insufficient use is made of the pre-entry assessment to plan learning or track progress.

53. Staff do not have sufficient understanding of target setting. They are not always effective in prioritising what needs to be learnt. Many objectives are not sufficiently broken down or effectively contextualised. This can result in broad objectives such as 'follow a routine', where the intended outcome is not clear enough to track progress over time. There is some variation in the quality of termly reviews of progress. The most effective reviews give a clear picture of progress made and identify skills to be developed, but it is not always possible to evaluate the progress students have made since they started the course.

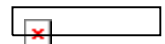
54. The curriculum is innovative. The use of horses as a teaching medium is particularly effective and harnesses students' interests well. They work to a rota at the weekend, clean the tack at night and show good organisational skills and group skills. Staff involved in the programme work both during the day and in the evening in the residence, ensuring a consistency of approach. The residential accommodation provides effective structure, with clear expectations, to which students respond well. There are a range of appropriate evening activities. Students value their work experience although the duration of these is short. Preparation for transition is good, with third year tutors building effective links with external agencies. However, the curriculum for equal opportunities is underdeveloped. Procedures to address issues of race, gender and sexuality are not planned. The current rule, that bans students' freedom to make exclusive relationships, is not appropriate for students aged over 19.

55. Support for students is good. Staff know the students well and provide sensitive and appropriate guidance to students. The use of individual goals for students during vacations is effective in providing continuity of learning. The college offers an annual two-day forum for parents or carers, and, where appropriate, has made home visits. The management of diet and health is good, with sensitive and effective support. The regular exercise associated with horse management impacts positively on students' fitness. The management of students' behaviour is effective.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior managers are effective in promoting a clear commitment to the college mission and to the benefits of riding therapy. The positive ethos set by managers promotes a culture of respect and trust. The staff work well as a team and there are effective means for sharing information, including the very detailed staff update and regular meetings. The college management team are committed to the principle of continuous improvement, but quality assurance arrangements are too reliant on informal contact. The judgements in the self-assessment report largely match the findings of inspectors, but are not substantiated by robust evidence. Equality of opportunity is not well promoted.

Literacy, numeracy and communications



Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**.

Strengths

- good development of communication skills

- good use of practical contexts to develop basic numeracy skills.

Weaknesses

- inadequate development of literacy skills and higher level numeracy skills

- too much unsatisfactory teaching

- insufficient specialist resources

- unsatisfactory assessment practices.

Scope of provision

57. Literacy, numeracy and communications are integrated into all areas of the extended curriculum. A recent development is the use of individual academic tutorials to provide additional support to students. Weekly individual tutorials are held by 12 full-time staff for literacy and numeracy, including personal budget management. All 37 students have literacy and numeracy as part of their timetables.

Achievement and standards

58. Students make good progress in communication. They are able to speak clearly and appropriately in a variety of settings. They listen carefully to their teachers and to each other, and improve eye contact and body language. Their politeness to each other as well as to their teachers is very marked. They learn how to ask for help when in difficulty or doubt and how to offer comfort to friends in trouble. Students also have good opportunities to practice and consolidate numeracy skills at basic levels.

59. Students do not sufficiently develop their skills in literacy or in numeracy beyond entry level 2. Literacy development in the practical context of riding and horse care is mainly restricted to letter and word recognition. Those students capable of further development are not making progress. Their progress in reading, spelling and punctuation is limited and they do not sufficiently improve their understanding of decimals or percentages. It is difficult to measure progress made as the starting point is not sufficiently clear.

Quality of education and training

60. Too much of the teaching of literacy at all levels and of numeracy at higher levels is unsatisfactory. Work for the more advanced students often does not stretch them enough. Teachers have difficulty understanding students' problems with basic literacy. They sometimes suggest inappropriate reading strategies to students such as sounding out phonically irregular words. Students may be asked to read aloud before having time to familiarise themselves with what they are reading. Many students have targets that are too generalised, such as 'improve reading skills', which are difficult to measure progress by. There is little work on numeracy above entry level 2 to challenge the more advanced students.

61. Teachers make good use of the contexts of riding, horsecare and independence skills to develop basic numeracy skills. Students learn to count markers, holes in girth straps, horses and riders. They are taught halves and quarters by measuring scoops of feed. They learn to estimate weights, read scales and judge whether to add or subtract quantities in filling hay nets and preparing their own meals. Great emphasis is put on telling the time and managing the time required to complete tasks in the yards and the kitchens. Students have effective weekly budget-management lessons in which they learn to budget and account for their personal spending. Students are well motivated, keen to improve their numeracy skills and proud of their progress.

62. Resources are unsatisfactory. There are insufficient staff with specialist training in teaching adult literacy or numeracy. Only two staff have this experience and one other has an initial teaching certificate. Resources for developing skills outside of practical contexts are inadequate. There are few learning materials which are contextualised to riding and the care of horses, other than short stories. Students have little access to paper-based materials or software with which to practise independently. There are too few computers for developing or presenting writing and no internet access for research. The newly designated basic skills tutors have few resources to help them develop literacy and numeracy teaching skills. However, the resource of the horses and the working environment are powerful and effective in motivating students to improve their numeracy. Students are particularly keen to learn from the staff who teach them to ride and to manage the horses.

63. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress in literacy, numeracy and communications are unsatisfactory. A variety of initiatives undertaken by different staff to improve assessment has led to overly complex systems for initial assessment. Too often, contradictory results from assessments are produced by different staff. Assessment summaries are not always signed or dated so that it is difficult to know to what stage of the students' life at the college they refer. No detailed diagnostic assessments have been undertaken since an inappropriate assessment, designed for young children, was abandoned at the start of the academic year. Results of assessments are not communicated to all of the staff who help students to develop their skills. Teachers reassess students' abilities and attainments using their own methods when they start their tutorials. Monitoring of students' progress is not consistent. Teachers find it difficult to measure progress accurately where starting points have not been clearly established. However, there are good records of students' progress in communication in their end of term reports.

64. The context in which students develop their literacy, numeracy and communication skills satisfactorily meets their needs and interests. Learning through riding and the care of horses is a strong motivator for students whose desire to communicate effectively, and whose interest in literacy and numeracy, is awakened. However, students' needs for literacy development and for numeracy above entry level 2 are not adequately met. A former qualification has not yet been replaced by alternative accreditation for students who would value it.

65. Academic support for students' literacy and numeracy development is unsatisfactory. Following a pilot in the previous academic year, the college has recently extended individual weekly literacy and numeracy tutorials to all students. It is intended that all staff know each student's targets and reinforce them on every possible occasion with weekly reports on progress. The system is designed well but not yet established. Most staff who have been newly designated as tutors have no training or experience in setting targets effectively and teaching literacy and numeracy. Not all of the staff who help students practise their skills daily are aware of students' specific targets. Most do not have the experience to help effectively or are too busy to record occasions when they have worked with students.

Leadership and management

66. Despite weaknesses in several areas arising from practices in the past, leadership and management are now satisfactory. Curriculum leaders set a clear direction about the importance of developing students' literacy and numeracy skills. Recent activities include redesigned assessment practices, auditing current practice in relation to the core curricula, a new basic skills tutorial system and the cross-college literacy and numeracy support scheme. Staff meetings are held weekly and staff feel that they are able to contribute ideas to the development of the college. The new systems are beginning to work well in the areas in which they were piloted, but are too recent to be

established elsewhere and for curriculum leaders to judge their effectiveness. There has been too little training for the staff concerned. Equality of opportunity is not strongly promoted. There is a culture of respect for the individual but no investigation of how individuals are progressing in comparison with others of the same gender or with the same disability. Quality assurance is not rigorous. Changes have stemmed from the accurate diagnosis of weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, and staff contribute to the report by completing a staff questionnaire, followed by a meeting to discuss the draft report. The self-assessment report identified many of the weaknesses, but did not give sufficient weighting to some of the weaknesses in teaching. Lesson observations are informal and are not related to the common inspection framework. There has been insufficient sharing of good practice.

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