

Minstead Training Project

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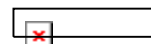
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Basic information about the college

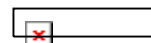
Name of college:	The Minstead Training Project
Type of college:	Independent, specialist, residential college
Project Director:	Mr Martin Lenaerts
Address of college:	Minstead Lodge Minstead Nr Lyndhurst Hampshire SO43 7FT
Telephone number:	023 8081 2297
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Chair of governors:	Mr Tim Selwood
Reference number*:	Charitable company no.: 3149116 Registered charity no.: 1053319
Name of reporting inspector:	Charlie Henry HMI
Dates of inspection:	24-28 May 2004

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

Part A: Summary

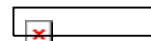


Information about the college



The Minstead Training Project is based in the village of Minstead, near Lyndhurst in the New Forest. It was founded in 1987 and is an independent charity providing education and training in work, life and social skills for people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The training project provides residential and day services and operates within properties owned by the Selwood Charitable Trust. It operates as a charity limited by guarantee. Within the extensive grounds there are workshops, a garden centre and shop, residential accommodation located on the first and second floors of Minstead Lodge, and supported tenancy houses. The main emphasis of the organisation is to provide a learning experience within practical everyday living and working situations in which students are able to realise their potential and achieve a level of independence appropriate to their ability. There are currently 13 residential students and 37 day students. Of these, four day students and three residential students are funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), two of whom are jointly funded with Social Services. Six students are aged 19 or over and one student is in the 16 to 18 age range. There are six male students and one female student, none of whom are from a minority ethnic background. Students have a broad range of learning disabilities, which include moderate and severe learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural disorders, and autistic spectrum and communication disorders.

How effective is the college?



Minstead Training Project makes good provision for its students. Teaching and learning are good overall. Students gain practical skills well and increasingly become more independent. Progress and achievement in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. High-quality resources are used well to support learning. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

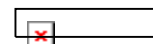
- good progress in practical and independent living skills
- much good teaching
- very good accommodation and resources
- practical based curriculum
- use of the community to extend learning
- very good quality support for personal and social development
- effective leadership.

What should be improved

- the co-ordination of literacy and numeracy
- insufficiently rigorous target setting
- slow implementation of the requirements of Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

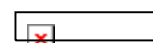
subjects and courses in the full report.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. Effective leadership by the director and good operational management by the managers and team leaders ensure that the ethos and aims of the provision direct all aspects of the project's work. The trustees make a strong contribution to the training project and are actively involved in its development. Development planning is satisfactory in establishing targets with a clear focus on students' needs. However, the use of data to monitor the targets is underdeveloped. Communication across the organisation is effective. Regular meetings keep all staff involved and up to date. Good daily communication between residential and day staff ensures that the changing needs of students are addressed well. The self-assessment process is good and involves all staff effectively, and the detailed action plan has a strong focus on improving students' experiences. However, the teaching observation process is not sufficiently rigorous or evaluative. Staff training is good and new staff receive a comprehensive induction. The arrangements for appraisal and supervision of staff are satisfactory. Financial management is sound and the training project provides good value for money.

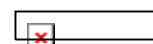
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory. For current students, the social and educational inclusion is good. Overall, the rights of students are promoted effectively throughout the training project. However, there is too little promotion of diversity within the curriculum. In addition, the project 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 project caters very well for a diverse group of students. They attend the provision from a wide area from across the United Kingdom.

Students come from a very broad and varied range of social backgrounds. All students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The initial assessment procedure is satisfactory and great care is taken to make sure that the project is appropriate to meet the needs of individual students. Of the seven LSC-funded students, six are male and none are from minority ethnic groups. The project makes satisfactory use of specialist community health services. It also 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 students prepare for life in the community. The project's provision for literacy and numeracy needs is not well co-ordinated.

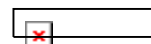
How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance for students are good. Personal support for students is very good. Care support staff work very well with curriculum staff to support students. Good attention is paid to all aspects of students' health and wellbeing. The initial assessment is satisfactory overall, although it is not routinely informed by specialist assessment, such as speech and language therapy or

required. The induction of students is comprehensive and makes good use of the effective communication between key workers and curriculum staff to ensure the needs of students are identified. Information and advice given to students, and to parents and carers, are good, including at the initial visit and as part of a trial period of attendance. Good communication with parents and carers is maintained through students' placements. Partnership links with the local Connexions service and other specialist agencies are good, and the preparation for transition from the college is effective.

Students' views of the college



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

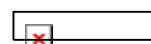
What students like about the college

- looking after animals
- cutting the grass
- potting plants
- their friends
- everything
- going on holiday.

What they feel could be improved

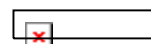
- the size of the dining room.

Other information

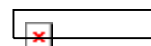


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college's action plan must show what action 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

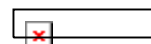


Scope of Provision



1. All of the seven LSC-funded students follow individual programmes in work, social and life skills. Curriculum activities include horticulture, wood workshop, pottery, catering and the range of independence skills within the residential settings. Where appropriate, students undertake work experience within the grounds, including in the garden centre and kitchens at Minstead Lodge, or are placed with employers in the local community. The development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is integrated into practical lessons and also taught in discrete groups to some students. Students have a varied and wide range of enrichment activities which complements their programmes and broadens their life experiences. Students use community facilities and amenities both for the development of independence skills and during their social and leisure time. One of the students attends the local further education (FE) college for additional training in cooking for independence. All students achieve through an internal award scheme in work, social and life skills. Students progress through the award and are assessed at three levels, according to the level of support they require to complete the activities.

Achievement and standards



2. Students make good progress in developing practical and independent living skills. They achieve well on their courses, gaining skills and meeting the targets that are set for them. They increase their ability to work independently. Students learn how to use a range of tools in the gardens, around the training project's grounds, in the workshop and in the kitchen. For example, they learn how to carry out basic woodwork techniques, such as cutting wood to the required size and joining pieces with screws. This work is of a high standard and the completed items are sold through a garden centre or made to order for visitors to the training project. The students learn how to prepare seedbeds and grow a range of plants. They take care of the young plants, watering and weeding them when it is needed. Some of their produce is exhibited in local shows, achieving success and developing further their social skills when talking to other gardeners. Within the flats, students learn to prepare their own meals. They plan for what they want to eat, checking what they need to buy, and then go shopping. They learn how to wash and iron their clothes and keep their room clean and tidy. In the kitchen, students learn to prepare a wide range of meals for other students and visitors to the training project's conference suite.

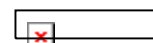
3. Personal and social development is very good. Students grow in confidence, and increasingly tackle their work independently. They learn important skills, including taking responsibility for what they do and how to work successfully as part of a group. For example, one student on work experience has improved his social skills, including his relationship with others, and now has the confidence to go to the supermarket at lunchtime to buy the lunch he would like.

4. Students make satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy. They develop useful skills in their practical work, for example, recognising the plants they are working with by matching the labels or measuring wood in the workshop. In the residential flats, students improve their understanding and use of money as they shop. However, progress is limited because there is not an overall plan to improve their skills across all aspects of their programme. Work within discrete literacy and numeracy lessons is not sufficiently linked to what they need to learn in other areas. Students learn some useful aspects of information technology (IT), for example, how to download and print images from a digital camera.

5. Students do well with respect to their prior attainments. However, not all of their progress is recognised through the targets that are set and the records that are maintained. Insufficient rigour in target setting also means that a few of the more able students do not make the full progress that they are capable of, for example, in working towards nationally recognised qualifications that will help them to progress to employment.

6. Retention rates are high, in line with similar independent specialist colleges. Analysis of destination data that has been kept for many years shows that most students achieve their overall goal of moving to more independent living settings. Many students progress to the supported tenancy opportunities in the local area, as well as continuing to use the training project as a day service. A few students gain access to supported employment and FE provision within general FE colleges. Attendance and punctuality during the inspection were very good.

Quality of teaching, training and learning



7. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Two-thirds of lessons observed were good or very good. Lessons are well planned around real and meaningful activities. The student follows through the entire task from start to finish so that they see the high quality of the work they produce, such as bird tables made from rustic timber. This approach motivates students effectively, helps them to take greater responsibility for their learning and improves their ability to solve problems when required. For example, a student with a disability affecting her hand, on work experience within the training project's catering kitchen, has developed techniques to use effectively kitchen equipment such as vegetable peelers and knives. Students want their work to be good. They review how well they have done and what they could have done better at the end of each task. A student using a petrol hedge trimmer for the first time learned for himself how to stand back and look at what he had achieved and see where the hedge was not completely level. Throughout the activity the student worked with due regard for health and safety.

8. Plans are built around students' achievement of the targets within elements of the internal award scheme. These award elements are constructed for individual students and contain targets based on the key aspects involved in producing an item or carrying out an important task, such as using a screwdriver appropriately. The targets are matched to the student's ability to work independently. Due to a lack of rigour and detail in some target setting, a few lessons lack sufficient pace, and the challenge for individual students is not as high as it should be.

9. Teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory overall. There is some effective teaching of these subjects in the practical lessons, for example, in using a measuring stick to correctly space plants in the seedbed. In the residential setting, staff successfully teach students how to work out how much money they have and to budget so that it lasts until they get more. They

also use pictures to help one student to learn the sequence of things she must do in order to travel on public transport. However, students' literacy and numeracy needs are not always identified and opportunities for teaching are missed. Teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy in discrete lessons do not always link well with what the student needs to learn for the rest of their programme and, occasionally, aspects are tackled that are beyond the ability of the learner.

10. There are sufficient teaching, care and support staff to meet the needs of the students. Most of the instructors have suitable expertise and qualifications in their vocational area. Staff in the residential provision are also suitably qualified and have completed, or are in the process of acquiring, qualifications required by the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

11. Accommodation and resources for learning are very good. The gardens, greenhouses and grounds around the main college building provide wide opportunities for teaching and learning horticultural and estate management skills. The workshops are well resourced to enable students to learn the skills for making rustic and other wooden furniture, such as garden seats, shelving, gates and bird boxes. Students use a broad range of hand tools and power tools safely, including petrol hedge cutters and electric drills. The on-site facilities are extended effectively through the use of a good range of work experience, for example, Furzey Gardens, the training project's award-winning garden centre that is open to the public, a sailing centre and a workshop where old tools are repaired to be used in developing countries. The training project's kitchen provides very good opportunities to learn catering skills. Residential accommodation is good. Most students live within small residential units within the training project's main building. Each student has their own bedroom that has been personalised well. Two students, who are more independent, stay in a flat where they look after themselves, with supervision. This is part of their planned transition towards supported accommodation away from the main training project building. Other on-site facilities include a computer room, a pottery, a swimming pool and an art room, providing a broad range of opportunities for learning and leisure. Local shops and recreation facilities, including the cinema and the local village pub, are also used effectively to develop a wide range of skills and interests. Public transport allows access to shops in the nearby towns and enables students to increase their independence.

12. Planning for, and reviewing of, progress is effective. There is a well-planned cycle of activities which is enhanced by good communication between staff. Students receive good individual support to help prepare them for their review meetings, including discussing what staff are to say about their progress in the actual meeting. Immediately after the meeting, the summary report and the action plan are explained to the student. Two months later, the action plan is checked and updated. In addition, regular individual planning meetings take place in between formal reviews so that key support workers and curriculum staff can update individual targets and programmes in light of the progress made. Initial assessment is satisfactory. However, it is not routinely informed by specialist assessment, such as speech and language therapy and educational psychology. A well-structured trial period, which can last up to two weeks, contributes to the initial assessment. The initial assessment continues during the three-month probationary period and is based on observation and structured aspects of the curriculum in work, life and social skills. The ongoing assessment of students' achievements and progress is too complex and is not sufficiently coherent or well structured. Instructors record achievements in terms of the level of support required by the student to perform their tasks. For example, the aim of one lesson was to prepare a seedbed and the practical skills required to achieve this were identified. The students were assessed as to whether they could perform these skills with support (level 1), with supervision (level 2), or independently (level 3). Achievements are summarised to inform the review. At the same time instructors record students' performance to a different set of competences after every lesson. This is further complicated as this information has to be translated to inform the review of students' progress.

13. The curriculum is good and prepares students well for their next stage. It has been designed effectively by the training project to meet the needs of its students through a practical approach to learning. Students learn meaningful skills in real activities, including in catering, horticulture and woodworking. This helps them understand the importance of achieving high standards in what they do. Examples include making sure the hedges were cut well for a forthcoming open day, and ensuring the quality of food presentation was high as it was to be served to other students and conference delegates. Similarly, in the residential flats the curriculum is based on the actual needs of students

living in supported and semi-independent accommodation. These skills are taught as part of the normal day, rather than in specific lessons. This helps students continue to use the skills they have learned independently. Each student follows an individualised programme based on an assessment of their needs. These programmes include: planning, shopping and cooking; cleaning, washing and ironing; and personal hygiene and care.

14. Recognition of achievements is through internally awarded certificates at one of three levels, depending on the extent to which the student required help. An important strength of this approach is that staff are able to design individualised targets and awards at one of these three levels that match well with the needs, interests and current attainments of the student. Students are able to achieve certificates at more independent levels within the award as they gain skills and confidence.

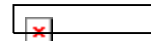
15. The literacy and numeracy curriculum is not sufficiently coherent. Students learn aspects of these skills in their residential and practical lessons, however, there is not an adequate link between these and the weekly discrete lesson that most students have. IT is taught to all students and they follow a nationally recognised entry level award. This supports their practical work, for example, in consolidating understanding of important signs they may see in the workplace and reviewing important aspects of their practical sessions by the use of digital camera images. Skills, including social and personal development, learned in the practical sessions are extended through good work experience. This uses a range of opportunities to prepare students for more independent living. There is a satisfactory link with other colleges, providing a few opportunities for learners to experience a larger college site with a different group of students, as part of preparation for their transition from Minstead.

16. Very good enrichment activities broaden students' experience. There is a range of activities undertaken on site, including drama and music. There are also evening and weekend events, including going to the cinema or on walks, taking part in sporting activities and joining local clubs, such as the Gateway Club, which takes place at the local general FE college. Different types of holidays are organised and students choose if they wish to attend. For one student, a holiday in Majorca was the first time she had been abroad; another is going on a camping trip with the club he is a member of.

17. Support and guidance for students are good. In particular, personal support is very good. Students have access to relevant and effective support on personal issues through high quality relationships with their key worker. In addition, the effective communication between the key support workers and the curriculum staff supports this process well. The initial visit and well-structured trial stay period of up to two weeks provide good access to advice and guidance for students and parents on the possible programmes. A well-planned and thorough induction and probationary period for new students helps them adjust to life in the training project. During this period, there is good support to establish students' learning needs in work, life and social skills. Good partnership links with relevant external agencies, such as Connexions, social services, local colleges and the disability employment adviser support the development of transition links and the sharing of relevant information.

18. Students are well prepared for transition from the project. Programmes are intended to develop students' skills to live as independently as possible once they leave the project. The planning for this process starts at the first review. Students, as appropriate, move into more independent living within the residence where there is an increased focus on doing things for themselves. They are treated with respect as adults. Support from the key worker and the domiciliary team is well-planned for students approaching transition into supported living in the community. This support includes visits and trial overnight stays. During the student's three-month probationary period at the new accommodation, the training project place is kept available in case the student wishes to return. Parents and carers are kept well informed of the students' progress through the review process and project newsletters that celebrate students' activities and achievements. When required, students have support from specialist community health services. Key workers provide good support for appointments to a range of medical visits.

Leadership and management



19. Leadership and management are good. Effective leadership ensures that the ethos and aims of the training project direct all aspects of the project's work. The project has a clear mission statement to provide responsive training in work, life and social skills to people who have learning disabilities, thus enabling them to realise their full potential and achieve a level of independence appropriate to their ability. This shared sense of mission and purpose permeates the entire staff team. The leadership by the project director is good. The trustees make a strong contribution to the project and are actively involved in its development. This includes chairing the weekly management meeting. Development planning is satisfactory in establishing targets and has a clear focus on the needs of the students. The training project has tackled successfully the issues raised by the previous inspection by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in 2000. The director is also supported well by the other managers and team leaders to ensure the good operational management of the project and the development of the curriculum. There are clear policies and procedures for specific areas such as risk assessment and the protection of vulnerable students.

20. Quality assurance and self-assessment processes are effective. Self assessment involves all staff well and has a strong focus on continuously improving the students' experience. The report successfully identifies some of the weaknesses identified during the inspection. However, it does not identify all of the curriculum weaknesses. The detailed action plan is implemented effectively and monitored carefully at each monthly team leaders' meeting. Feedback from parents, carers and professionals is sought every two years about the standard of the service provided by the project. The outcomes are satisfactorily summarised and discussed at a whole staff team day, and subsequently integrated into the self-assessment action plan. Feedback from students is satisfactorily identified through discussion and completion of a questionnaire in preparation for their review.

21. The use of management information is underdeveloped to support planning for improvement. The three year 'Success for All' development plan satisfactorily identifies targets for improvement, such as student success rates. However, the training project has only recently started to identify the data requirements needed to monitor the targets. Recent developments have taken place in collecting and reporting information on students' achievements to allow evaluation of trends and areas for improvement, however, this information has yet to be used. Teaching observation is not sufficiently rigorous or planned to ensure that all instructors are included each year. There is no overall policy to support the planning of observations. During 2003, only two observations took place, while only four have taken place since the start of this year. The process is not sufficiently evaluative, nor does it sufficiently identify areas for improvement.

22. Communication across the organisation is effective. A regular series of meetings keeps all staff involved and up to date. Staff are routinely consulted by the management team on new initiatives and proposed changes. Information from the management team is disseminated effectively to all staff through set agenda items and presentations by the management team. Planned meetings involving curriculum and care staff ensure that the changing needs of students are addressed effectively. Good and extensive daily communication on student-related issues ensures swift dissemination of information.

23. Professional development is well promoted. All staff have a comprehensive induction, undertaken by the project director, to ensure their understanding of the students' particular needs and the importance of the range of policies and procedures. Staff expertise is developed well through a good professional development programme that covers many important areas of working with students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for example, managing difficult behaviour and meeting the needs of learners who have autistic spectrum disorders. This training is provided by expertise within the staff group, by visiting trainers and by attending external courses. There is, however, too little recent training on promoting equality and diversity, for example, on matters relating to living in a multicultural world. Staff training is evaluated for its impact on

performance. The annual staff appraisal scheme is satisfactory. However, the quality of the completion of the appraisal documentation varies. In some cases, there is insufficient evaluation of staff performance while in others the appraisal process is completed comprehensively. Some staff supervision sessions contribute to identifying individual training needs.

24. Overall, the promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. An equal opportunities policy is in place, but it is not structured well and does not include references to recent legislation. Social and educational inclusion for current students is good and the rights of students are promoted effectively throughout the project. However, the promotion of diversity within the curriculum is not sufficiently developed. The project has been slow in responding to the statutory requirements of the SENDA and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Recently, an access audit of the buildings and grounds has been undertaken with identified actions integrated into the maintenance schedule. Managers and trustees have been slow to react to their duties to address issues of equality of opportunity for students from minority ethnic groups.

25. Financial management is sound. Schedule and purchase orders are regularly reviewed to ensure that the students receive the support they need and the contracts with the local LSC are met. The fulfilment of these requirements is confirmed by the inspection. Resources are effectively deployed. The project provides good value for money.