

## Strathmore College

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## Basic information about the college

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| Name of college:  | Strathmore College   |
| Type of college:  | Independent, specialist, residential   |
| Acting Principal:   | Janice Kerr  |
| Address of college:   | Jasmine<br>38/40 Dimsdale Parade East<br>Wolstanton<br>Newcastle under Lyme<br>ST5 8BU |
| Telephone number:   | 01782 740034   |
| Fax number:   | 01782 714860   |
| Chief Executive:  | John Newall  |
| Reference number*:  |  |
| Name of reporting inspector:  | Gill Reay HMI  |
| Dates of inspection:  | 4-8 October 2004   |

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

## Part A: Summary

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## Information about the college

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Strathmore College is an independent specialist residential college that provides further education (FE) and training for students with moderate to severe learning difficulties aged 16 to 25. The college is owned by Craegmoor Healthcare, a private limited company, based in Droitwich, Worcestershire. Strathmore College is one of three residential specialist colleges owned by the company. The college is situated on a variety of sites in the Stoke on Trent area. Although the college recruits regionally and nationally, most students come from North Staffordshire. The college operates 52 weeks of the year. Currently there are 30 residential and 14 day students, of which 30 are male and 14 female. There are 14 students aged 16 to 18, the remaining 28 students are aged over 19. Data relating to minority ethnic groups is not systematically recorded. All teaching is practical and makes extensive use of floristry and catering retail outlets based at Jasmine in Newcastle under Lyme. The college also makes substantial use of its three residential homes for teaching. Florence Villa and Park View provide residential accommodation for the majority of students whilst the four-bedroomed annexe and two bedroomed terraced property allow students to move from supported to

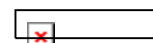
independent living during their time at college.

The primary aim of the college is to 'enable individuals to become as independent as possible through careful assessment of need, providing appropriate support in accordance with individual strengths, preferences and choices'. The college curriculum comprises two main elements: the formal timetable and the extended curriculum that includes a structured programme of evening and weekend activities. The curriculum is based around realistic practical settings and uses a Mencap award as an assessment framework. Shopping and leisure activities offer students opportunities to practise and extend skills learned in the formal timetable. Students are encouraged, where possible, to plan and manage their own leisure time. A significant amount of teaching takes place in the local community.

## **Context**

In 1987, Strathmore House was purchased to provide residential care for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. The trading name of the company at this time was Strathmore Associates a privately owned company. In January 2001, the company was divided into two limited companies, that of Strathmore Care Services Ltd (High Cross House and Strathmore House), and Strathmore College Limited (Florence Villa and Park View). Jasmine was then purchased as a training centre to enable students to experience realistic work experience through the retail outlets of catering and floristry. At the time of purchase, only the ground floor of the building was utilised, as the upstairs was private living accommodation. In 1996, the upstairs of Jasmine was purchased, extending the facilities and providing training rooms for additional activities such as business and enterprise. High Cross, Blurton, was purchased in 1996, and this remains a residential care home. The majority of the residents are ex-students of the college. In July 2003, Strathmore College and Strathmore Care Services were acquired by Craegmoor Healthcare Limited. The role of principal was created in 2003. However, there has not been a substantive principal in post since the college was purchased by Craegmoor Healthcare Limited. In January 2004, the current principal was appointed as an interim manager on a monthly contract. There has been some continuity of operational management as the current principal acted as a management consultant to Strathmore College but there has been inadequate strategic planning and development by the parent company.

## **How effective is the college?**



Overall, the college provides good or better teaching and a wide range of opportunities for learning for its students. There is no difference between the achievements of students aged 16 to 18 and those who are aged over 19. Independent living skills programmes are outstanding. Provision for literacy, numeracy, communication and vocational programmes is good. The college provides very good realistic work settings with good promotion of health and safety. Guidance and initial and baseline assessments are effective and personal support for students is good. Residential accommodation is good and used effectively for teaching. Standards of students' work are very good in practical activities and in the development of personal skills. Behaviour management is effective and unobtrusive.

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

### **Key strengths**

- very good achievement

- good standards of students' work
- very good practical teaching
- good teaching and residential accommodation
- comprehensive assessment
- work placements
- good individual support
- effective behaviour management
- good day-to-day management
- good promotion of inclusion.

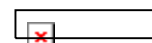
***What should be improved***

- weak strategic leadership and management from the parent company
- the effectiveness of curriculum review
- the promotion of racial diversity

- the adequacy of staff qualifications in literacy, numeracy and communication.

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

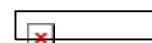
### Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



*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   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Vocational programmes                | <b>Good.</b> Very good teaching in practical lessons, with thorough monitoring and assessment which helps students develop good personal and learning skills. Students achieve good standards in their work. The college's florist and café shops are well resourced and provide students with a good realistic working environment. Learning support is sometimes ineffective and quality assurance arrangements for curriculum review and planning are underdeveloped.  |
| Literacy, numeracy and communication | <b>Good.</b> Teaching is very good and students achieve good standards of work. Individual learning plans are effective, include challenging targets and build on good baseline assessment. Good communication and numeracy skills are developed in practical settings. However, teachers miss some opportunities to develop formal writing skills; support staff have insufficient qualifications.   |
| Independent living skills            | <b>Outstanding.</b> Students' achievements are outstanding; they develop skills needed for every day life such as cooking, travelling independently and speaking for themselves. Very effective links between teaching and residential staff help students to learn through individualised, well-planned practical activities. Baseline and ongoing assessments combined with detailed individual learning plans clearly demonstrate students' progress and learning outcomes. Behaviour management is effective and unobtrusive. |

### How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strategic planning and oversight by the parent company is unsatisfactory. There has been no substantive principal in post since the college was purchased by Craegmoor Health. Day-to-day operational management of the college is good. All teaching is satisfactory or better and standards of students' work are very good. Management information is collected but not effectively evaluated and self-assessment is not sufficiently rigorous.

The curriculum framework needs further development. For example, sport and horticulture are parts of the formal curriculum but external accreditation is not yet available for all achievements. Quality assurance of the curriculum is underdeveloped. Financial management is satisfactory. The college provides good value for money in relation to its financial procedures and procurement of services.

#### **To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?**

The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. It attracts students from across the country and meets the needs of students well overall. Students access a range of appropriate activities that are socially inclusive. Very good behaviour plans that are consistently applied by all staff enable students to make extensive use of community facilities. Literacy, numeracy and communication provision is good and based around practical activities. The college responds effectively to incidents of bullying and harassment. There has been a satisfactory response to the implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and the Race Relations (amendment) 2000. In conjunction with the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the college is developing plans to widen the participation of minority ethnic groups. There is very good promotion of disability and diversity and students understand the need to respect each others' differences. However, the promotion of racial diversity is underdeveloped. Opportunities for realistic work experience and promotion of health and safety are good.

#### **How well are students and trainees guided and supported?**

Support and guidance for students are good. Information and guidance about the college prior to entry is detailed, clear and well presented. Comprehensive, individualised and consistent support is provided by teachers and learner support staff. Initial guidance and induction are good. Students settle quickly into a supportive but challenging culture that extends their learning. There is good communication between teachers and support staff. Support in the residences is good and enables students to develop very good personal and independent living skills but in-class support is sometimes ineffective. Students are enabled to direct and control their learning, personal lives and relationships. The college ensures that specialist careers advice and transition planning is fully embedded in students' programmes and there is good progression to FE and supported living.

#### **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***

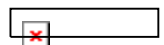
- the range of courses and activities

- meeting friends
- using the digital camera
- doing things for themselves
- work experience in the kitchen
- getting medals at sport
- having their own rooms
- travelling independently
- the staff
- going to the pub and bowling.

***What they feel could be improved***

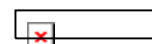
- more work placements
- more opportunities to bake.

**Other information**

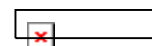


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring 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 should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

## Part B: The college as a whole



### Achievement and standards



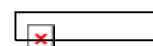
1. Students at Strathmore College are aged 16 to 25. Most lessons are for groups of students of mixed age. Inspectors were therefore not able to make significant distinctions between the teaching and learning of students aged 16 to 18 years and those aged 19 plus. For the purposes of this report, all judgements relate to students aged 16 to 25.
2. Students develop very good skills of critical analysis and problem solving through realistic practical activities. Staff use effective questioning techniques and carefully structured practical tasks to enable students to discuss their work and to find solutions to practical issues. As a result, students produce work of a good standard that stretches them, and helps them to develop both practical and cognitive skills.
3. Development of communication skills is good. Many students develop confidence in using language in a range of situations. In some cases they learn to mix with their peers by initiating conversations, or to communicate confidently in the community. Students with significant communication difficulties learn to communicate effectively, and those with behavioural difficulties develop language and a wide range of strategies to help manage their behaviour.
4. All students follow a Mencap award that consists of four elements: daily living skills; personal care and presentation; community and leisure; and practical and vocational skills. Each element can be awarded at three levels. Most students meet their targets, and are successful in achieving credits in awards and for units completed. In 2002, four students achieved level 1; in 2003, 10 students achieved level 1 and five achieved level 2. In 2004, 14 students achieved level 1, 22 achieved level 2 and 10 achieved level 3. A small number of students take national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and are usually successful. For example, in 2003, one student achieved a full NVQ and four students who achieved 3 units are now working for the full award in 2004/05. There is no systematic analysis of achievement through self-assessment to predict trends. The college holds award ceremonies to acknowledge a wide range of achievements from every aspect of college life.
5. Standards are consistently good. Students achieve a good standard of work in vocational programmes, literacy, numeracy and communication. In independent living skills achievement is outstanding. For example students travelling independently have to make three bus changes but still arrive for work or college on time. Students develop good levels of employment-related skills, for example, a student on their first day of placement in a garage was able to join co-workers for lunch and communicate well. Many students progress to part-time or full-time study in general FE colleges.
6. Students achieve their long-term primary learning goals. They achieve individual success against



appropriately challenging educational, vocational, personal and social goals and are reviewed regularly. The achievement of learning is recorded through individual learning plans and students are supported in negotiating goals through discussions with relevant staff. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is followed by students and the extended curriculum offers many links with the community and opportunities to broaden students' experiences. For example, drama, the Special Olympics, arts, crafts, skiing, swimming, activity holidays, weekend rambles and horticulture. Students are fully aware of the activities available at the college and agreeing to participate is a condition of enrolment and is recorded in learner agreements.

7. Rates of retention are high at 96%, in line with other specialist colleges. During the week of inspection, attendance was very good at 97% and most students were punctual.

### Quality of teaching, training and learning



8. The majority of teaching is good or better. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. In the best lessons, teachers set demanding targets, and practical activities are well planned to enable students to develop skills and confidence. The residences and community are used well by teachers and key workers as a resource for learning. Every activity and journey is used to engage and challenge students. Students at Strathmore College are highly motivated and are purposely occupied throughout the formal and extended curriculum.

9. There are well structured schemes of work. The best teaching is in practical working environments. Teachers use questioning techniques effectively to draw out students' understanding. Facilities for floristry and catering are of industry standards and provide a realistic working environment. Students are taught relevant vocabulary for the areas of work and their understanding of terminology is reinforced. Teachers expect high standards from students; in dress codes, punctuality and professionally completed tasks.

10. In the less effective lessons, too much time is spent on one activity and students become restless and inattentive. In work placements and in lessons, support was least effective where the learning support staff intervene too quickly to give the student the correct answer. There is little promotion of racial diversity through teaching and learning materials.

11. There is good use of information technology (IT) and students use digital cameras and computers to record their learning and as evidence for portfolios. Students make good use of a commercial till to cost sale items and calculators to count stock so they know what to order. The college has an information and learning technology (ILT) strategy, which is currently in the first year of its implementation. The initial priority is to create networked facilities between teaching and residential facilities. Teachers make good use of ICT for setting targets and monitoring and recording students' progress.

12. Staff are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their students. They are encouraged, and eager, to undertake updating and professional development. For example, care staff attend a local FE college for their NVQ level 3. However, not all staff have recent specialist or teaching qualifications. Teachers are skilled in using effective strategies to develop students' social and independence skills and to manage inappropriate behaviours. In recent years, the college has had difficulties in recruiting suitable well qualified and experienced staff. Subsequently, the college has tried to develop its own staff and provide them with training and qualification opportunities. This strategy is beginning to be effective but there are currently insufficient numbers of staff with specialist and literacy and numeracy qualifications, and cover for staff absences is sometimes problematic. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report and the college is working with a Skills for Life consultant to develop a training programme for care staff to support the teaching of independent living skills. Access to speech and language specialists is limited. The college has recognised these difficulties and is in the process of drawing up an agreement with a consultant to evaluate speech

and language needs and to develop a cohesive approach to students' needs. In vocational programmes, most teachers and learning support staff have relevant vocational experience. There are missed opportunities to teach students strategies to improve their reading and writing skills. For example, students were given inappropriate and conflicting spelling strategies in lessons.

13. The residential accommodation comprises three properties located in the Dresden and Normacot areas of Stoke-on-Trent. A further property, Jasmine, is newly refurbished, is the administrative base for the college and provides training opportunities in catering, floristry and business. Residential accommodation is attractive, well maintained and homely. There are very good workplace resources; the floristry and café provide students with opportunities for work experience and to interact with the community. The residences provide excellent facilities for students to develop a wide range of daily living skills, interpersonal skills and general food hygiene. The allotment and Apedale Country Park provide resources in the community and tasks undertaken are realistic and relevant to targets set for students. There is a comprehensive work placement programme, and the more able students gain placements with local employers.

14. Risk assessment is comprehensive and all students have a detailed risk assessment for all their activities. Attention to health and safety issues is also very good. For example, students produced a very good risk assessment of a disco they were going to hold in a local community hall.

15. Pre-entry and baseline assessments are comprehensive, detailed and provide a sound basis to identify individual learning goals. Individual learning plans provide a comprehensive range of learning goals that are used effectively to prioritise and measure individual students' progress. The systems to track and record students' progress against these individual goals are thorough. At the end of lessons there is a well-managed evaluation period, which enables students to review their own performance with the staff and to make suggestions for the next lesson. The staff assessment of lessons is very detailed and provides information that is used to contribute to regular monthly assessment meetings where students' progress is reviewed and evaluated. Any additional achievements which the students make are captured by staff and recorded centrally in individual students' files.

16. Residential and day students undergo a one week initial assessment that is comprehensive. The college carries out a comprehensive review of information provided by the students, their parents, carers and other agencies. From this process, an initial individual learning programme is developed, and learning targets are devised. During the first six weeks, assessment continues and additional information is used to develop the baseline assessment. At the end of the six-week assessment period the student's individual learning plan is finalised. This process will include amending the individual learning plan, and modifying the student's targets. A support plan is also agreed and resources, including support staff, are allocated. Targets are specific, linked to learning activities and are communicated effectively across the staff teams. The targets are regularly reviewed and parents, carers and other external agencies are effectively involved in the process. The majority of students show a good understanding of their own individual goals and how their vocational learning is contributing to their achievement. External moderation of awards is effective.

17. Staff are trained to meet the communication needs of students as they arise. For example, in the current year staff have undergone training in Makaton but there is no overarching development programme to ensure that staff are able to communicate effectively with students.

18. The college provides outstanding opportunities to enable students to develop and extend their independent living skills. Students are able to practise their communication and social skills both in the college and in the community. Programmes encourage choice and develop the strengths of individuals. Some of the more able students are able to extend their experience by attending local FE colleges and participating in work experience placements. There is limited coherence between students' programmes at local FE colleges, work placements and the curriculum offered at Strathmore College.

19. The college responds well to the needs and interests of students. There is a good range of vocational programmes through which the students acquire vocational skills in horticulture, catering, floristry, customer care, retail and business. Numeracy and oral communication skills are embedded

into the vocational curriculum, but reading and writing skills are not. Students develop excellent interpersonal, behaviour and time management skills. However, there is no clear curriculum framework or procedure to review and develop the curriculum. Progression routes across vocational areas are unclear. Good links with local businesses and the community provide external work placements. These enable students to gain access to sports facilities and opportunities to improve their independent living skills. For example, the Special Olympics and the Young Enterprise Scheme give students the opportunity to compete successfully against other local schools and colleges.

20. Support and guidance for students are good. Information and guidance prior to entry are detailed, clear and well documented. A pre-entry meeting with students, parents, a social worker and a Connexions adviser covers the documentation required upon entry, college policies, and specimen timetables, and recent information about students is also verified. The transition into the college programme involves 'taster' visits. The length of these visits are dependent upon individual students' needs. For example, one student started their taster visits a year before entry and built his attendance from half a day to fully residential. The student and parents are contacted by the key worker one month before they start the visits. There is also an induction programme for staff prior to the arrival of new students to ensure the support requirements of new students are in place. Assessment staff may visit prospective students in familiar situations in their home area in order to achieve a better understanding of their needs.

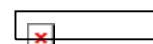
21. There are strong links between key workers, learner support staff and teachers. Staff work in teams and there is good communication and effective sharing of information between educational and care settings. Initial assessment is good and provides a sound baseline from which the six-week induction process can develop an individual learning plan. Members of staff with specialised skills or expertise act as a point of contact for other staff in order to share information or offer advice. All staff have access to each student's individual learning plan and successfully use this information in lesson planning. Destination goals are identified at the first review. Annual reviews involve parents and, where possible, representatives from Connexions and social services. The reports are comprehensive and detailed.

22. Some learning support in teaching situations does not address students' needs; intervention may be too soon or not soon enough. Speech and language needs are included in the individual learning plan and referrals are made to local health trust provision. However, there is no overall strategy to develop students' communication skills or to identify the development needs of teachers and support workers. The college employs a clinical psychologist for one day each week to address the psychological support needs of individual students within discrete sessions.

23. There are very strong links with parents; these include significant support and surveys of parents' views. There are close links with Connexions advisers from the students' home areas. The college has a named local connexions adviser who works closely with staff from the college. There is an effective transition programme, for example, the 'Moving on group'.

24. Students receive effective personal support throughout their programme. For example, one student with mental health difficulties was supported throughout her treatment with a special support programme that included daily contact with her parents. This special programme has enabled the student to attend the college to complete her course and maintain progress towards her planned destination.

## Leadership and management



25. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although day-to-day management of the college is good there is weak strategic leadership and management from the parent company. The college is currently in transition to become part of a large independent organisation that provides long-term care for people with special educational needs. There is a lack of clarity about the role of the

principal within the parent company. This lack of clarity has limited the strategic oversight in terms of shaping the direction and measuring the performance of the college.

26. Target setting at an institutional level is underdeveloped and quality assurance processes are not rigorously applied. There is an annual planning cycle that reviews quality standards across the college to formulate appropriate development plans. The effectiveness of this process is limited by lack of systematic monitoring. Opportunities are missed to sharing ownership through delegated responsibilities. All staff contribute to the self-assessment process but the purpose of self-assessment is not fully understood by all members of staff. Curriculum review and evaluation are not effectively established; there is a lack of meaningful recording, target setting and benchmarking to review performance. The role of teachers in curriculum development is not fully developed. For example, several staff are exploring the possibility of accreditation for their areas, however, these initiatives come from teachers' individual interests and not from a strategic review of the existing curriculum and students' needs. There are well-established links with local colleges, but there are no formal agreements, the information that is exchanged in relation to students' needs and progress is insufficient and there is a lack of rigorous monitoring of quality. There is a good partnership with the local connexions service.

27. The college received positive reports from Care Standards Council Inspectorate (CSCI) in January and August 2004 and it has complied very well with resulting action plans. There is an established system of staff supervision and appropriate staff training is being undertaken. The annual staff appraisal for teachers is well documented; however, the formal teaching observation programme is underdeveloped. There is a strong commitment to the college's mission from all staff, who show a clear sense of purpose and philosophy. The college undertakes feedback surveys of staff, students and parents to provide information on current and future areas of students' needs. As a result, the college has increased the number of day students. At the time of the inspection, the college had autonomy from the parent company in recruiting, managing and deploying personnel. It manages these functions well. The college has a pro-active recruitment policy to develop the skills and expertise of new and existing staff, based upon the needs of projected student intakes. The college is working to develop existing staff for promoted posts. Mentors support members of staff who are training on the job. The college received the Investors in People Award in 1999. There is effective staff induction.

28. The college is at the early stages of implementing their five-year information learning technology (ILT) strategy. And teachers are using ICT effectively in their teaching. The college management information system is underdeveloped and currently relies on a combination of paper copies, and e-mails. There is little systematic evaluation of data.

29. Whilst the college has made a satisfactory response to the SENDA and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000, it has been slow to promote staff training for racial diversity. There is very good promotion of social inclusion, integration in to the local community and learning difficulties, but promotion of racial diversity is weak. There has been no evaluation of how the equality and diversity policies impact on the curriculum.

30. Day-to-day management is good. All key weaknesses have been addressed since the last inspection. The principal is well supported by the training and education manager. There has been effective continuity of operational management throughout the period of transfer of ownership, which has allowed the college to maintain the quality of provision during this extended transition period. Efficient and effective use is made of resources, both in the college accommodation and in the community. Students feel valued and have a clear understanding of the purpose of their programmes. Teams within the residential provision are well managed and operate professionally. The quality of teaching and residential accommodation is good. Students' achievements, attendance and punctuality are very good. There is a formal procedure for reporting incidents and complaints. The college's response to child protection legislation is satisfactory. The college operates enhanced Criminal Records Bureau vetting procedures and data protection.

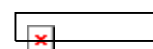
31. Financial management of the college is satisfactory. The college received a satisfactory report from the LSC Financial Assurance Team in August 2004. At the time of inspection, the college was being supported by the parent company to initiate the ILT strategy with capital funding. The parent

company is providing IT support to explore the opportunities to extend the joint academic network connection. There are regular monitoring visits to the college from the regional manager of the parent company.

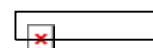
32. Residential students attend the college for 52 weeks each year; day students have 38-week placements. Success is celebrated at the end of the summer term with a large awards ceremony.

33. The college provides good value for money.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Vocational programmes



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

#### **Strengths**

- good standard of students' work
- very good development of personal and learning skills
- much good teaching
- effective use of resources to support learning
- comprehensive and thorough assessment.

#### **Weaknesses**

- ineffective learning support
- underdeveloped quality assurance arrangements for curriculum review.

### ***Scope of provision***

34. All students follow a vocational curriculum underpinned by a Mencap award. For more than half of the students, this is wholly delivered in work placements. In 2003, 16 students worked in Jasmine where the college operates a floristry and a café shop as commercial ventures. The students learn to manage and organise all aspects of these businesses. Four students had work placements with local employers whilst other students gain work experience in the Young Enterprise Scheme by setting up a business to create and market products.

### ***Achievement and standards***

35. Students achieve a high standard of work. Thorough base line assessment helps students to set challenging learning and behavioural goals that are referenced to the Mencap Award, which is the core of all students' curriculum.

36. Students decide which vocational options best meet their interests and goals. Where appropriate, students work towards NVQ level 1 in distributive operations. In 2003, one student achieved the full NVQ and four students who achieved three units are aiming to achieve the full award this year. Students make very good progress with personal and skills development through a comprehensive work placement programme. In 2003, 20 students had work placements of which 4 were with local employers. There are 14 students who attend local FE colleges at least one day a week.

37. Students who travel independently are punctual and manage their time well; several students negotiate three bus changes. One student managed time by informing the teacher that he would be late the following week, giving the time he expected to arrive. Good communication between teachers and key workers ensures students prepare appropriately for the different aspects of the programme. One student was not dressed appropriately to work in the shop, this was fed back immediately to her key worker so that it could be raised with the student before the next work placement. Business students have achieved a high standard of work in the Young Enterprise Scheme. They perform well against schools and other colleges. Attendance and punctuality rates are very good.

### ***Quality of education and training***

38. Teaching and learning is good or better in the majority of sessions. There is no unsatisfactory teaching or learning. Well-planned lessons take account of each student's personal learning goals, behavioural targets and the development of skills for realistic work experience.

39. The best teaching is in the practical working environments. In these lessons, tutors give clear instructions that students listen to carefully and apply to their tasks. Tutors have high expectations of students and make good judgements about when to intervene. Students are confident, well motivated and work well with each other in paired tasks in the work placements and in reviewing learning goals.

40. Two students preparing a buffet in the café kitchen practised their numerical skills by deciding how much of each ingredient to buy in the local supermarket. They ensured that food hygiene was maintained and that the buffet food was prepared correctly and displayed attractively. At the same time they responded to sandwich orders from the student who was managing the café. This student was able to practise his numeracy skills by calculating the cost of the orders and writing skills by noting the order and making a record of items he had sold.

41. Good use is made of ILT. Students use digital cameras and computers to record their activities. Teachers and students use laptop computers to review learning at the beginning and end of lessons. Students make good use of computers in recording stock lists and checks, to prepare advertisements for the Young Enterprise Scheme and to record evidence for their NVQ portfolios.

Students make good use of a cash till and calculator to cost sale items and to stock-check.

42. There is an excellent realistic working environment at Jasmine where students run a florist, café and shop fronting onto a busy road. The café and shop have new commercial equipment and the florist is particularly well stocked with flowers from a local supplier, which the students then prepare for sale. The business training facilities are too small and become overheated. This makes it difficult to carry out planned activities. In one lesson, the tutor abandoned the practical activity because the room was overcrowded; this led to the students becoming inattentive. Although teachers and learner support staff have relevant vocational experience, few teachers are qualified to support the integration of literacy, numeracy and communication in the vocational curriculum and they do not give students strategies to improve their reading and writing skills.

43. Very good assessment arrangements make an effective contribution to the planning of individual programmes. This includes a thorough initial assessment period where students take part in the full range of vocational options. Through discussion with the students, this leads to the effective identification of students' individual needs for learning, support, behaviour management and care. Students show a good understanding of their own individual goals and how their vocational learning is contributing to their achievement.

44. Regular ongoing assessment in lessons and in the working environment identifies small learning steps towards achievement of goals. All aspects of the assessment process are used in review meetings, which involve students and their parents. This results in new targets and activities being agreed that ensure the students continue to progress and achieve targets to acquire relevant vocational skills.

45. The college responds well to the needs and interests of students. There is a wide range of opportunities through which the students acquire skills in horticulture, catering, floristry, customer care, retail and business. Students develop excellent interpersonal skills through working with others and personal skills in decision making. However, vocational options lack coherence and progression routes lack clarity. There are effective links with local businesses and the community, which provide external work placements and give students access to sports facilities and opportunities to improve their independent living skills.

46. Comprehensive and thorough individual learning plans and support plans are used to ensure students' learning needs are met. The individual learning plans are used effectively to inform lesson planning and appropriate activities to extend students' skills. Clear guidance in preparing for transition is closely linked to students' interests and the vocational skills they have acquired.

47. Teachers are skilful in providing unobtrusive and effective guidance and support to students with challenging behaviour so that there is no detrimental impact on other students' learning. Support in the classroom is not always effective to assist learners to extend their understanding and skills. Staff have underdeveloped skills and do not fully understand strategies for learning in a vocational setting. On too many occasions in practical lessons and sporting activities, the learning support staff intervene too quickly when the students are preparing to answer a question and students miss the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. In other lessons, the learner support staff did not respond quickly enough to inattentive behaviour and the teacher had to stop the lesson to ensure that other students were not disrupted.

### ***Leadership and management***

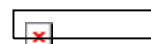
48. Leadership and management in the vocational curriculum are satisfactory. There is good operational co-ordination of the vocational curriculum at Jasmine and students follow well-devised flexible programmes that respond to their needs and interests.

49. Quality assurance arrangements for curriculum review are underdeveloped. There is no course team structure and little evidence of teachers' involvement in course review and planning. Opportunities for teachers to extend the range of vocational options and to share good practice at course team level are missed. The college has recognised this in its self-assessment report but

improvements have not yet been implemented. The arrangements for placements in local FE colleges are informal and therefore the college is not able to be assured of the quality of learning that students are receiving in other colleges. There is no college strategy to ensure that the vocational curriculum actively promotes diversity. Teachers promote disability diversity and ensure that students understand the need to respect each other's differences; however, the promotion of racial diversity is underdeveloped.

50.

### **Literacy, numeracy and communication**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good standard of work across all areas
- effective individual learning plans
- very good teaching
- very good development of numeracy skills
- good development of communication skills.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- missed opportunities for formal writing skills
- insufficiently qualified support staff.

#### ***Scope of provision***

51. The development of literacy, numeracy and communication skills is embedded in all areas of learning: vocational studies, independent living skills, work placements and community activities.



Some students attend discrete provision in local FE colleges.

### ***Achievement and standards***

52. Students' overall achievements are very good; in particular, numeracy skills are well developed. Students achieve individual success against appropriately challenging literacy, numeracy, and communication targets that are practised in realistic practical settings. Achievement of targets is reviewed regularly. In work situations, for example, the café business, students are prepared to participate effectively in the workplace and gain good numeracy skills through stock-taking and use of the till. In work placements, students demonstrate good communication skills; for example, one student was able to join in lunch-time discussions with co-workers on his first day of placement. The achievement of learning is effectively recorded through individual learning plans and students are supported in negotiating goals through discussions with all relevant staff to ensure individual needs are met. Students' attendance during the inspection was very good at 95% and was consistent with other specialist colleges.

### ***Quality of education and training***

53. All teaching is satisfactory and a substantial amount is good or better. Teaching is well planned and ensures that students are offered a wide range of challenging learning opportunities to meet the targets in their individual learning plans. There are well-structured schemes of work and comprehensive lesson plans that meet the specific communication needs of individual students. Tutors use questioning techniques effectively to develop students' understanding, and learning takes place across a wide range of provision on college sites and in the community. Work placements provide opportunities to develop numeracy skills. Stock control and cash handling provide relevant opportunities to embed numeracy skills. Students are taught relevant vocabulary for the areas of work and understanding of terminology is reinforced. In a floristry lesson, students were asked to condition the flowers. They carried out the task and when questioned, without prompting, explained the technique and why it was necessary. Good use is made of impromptu learning opportunities. For example, on returning from an outside visit, the students asked to take their lunch to a park. This was agreed by all members of the group and the tutor asked if they would like to visit the museum in the park. Students practised their communication and numeracy skills by engaging with museum staff and exhibits.

54. Resources are good and support learning. The refurbishment of Jasmine has provided students with an industry-standard facility for realistic work experience training in catering and floristry. There is good use of digital cameras to record students' achievements. Space within the business enterprise room is inadequate for training but practical sessions are delivered in an appropriate environment. For example, as part of business enterprise, students conducted a risk assessment for a disco to take place in the community centre hall. Students recorded information and raised safety issues with the hall staff. The students then prepared a short health and safety talk to be given at the start of the disco.

55. The college uses a wide variety of community venues to support the development of students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills. These include sports centres, natural woodland and local theatre. The college's own residential sites are well resourced to provide further opportunities for developing literacy, numeracy and communication through shopping, using public transport and preparing meals. Students know and understand the targets set in their individual learning plans.

56. There are high levels of support for the development of student's literacy, numeracy and communication skills. However, opportunities to develop formal writing skills are lost due to the lack of subject experience of support staff and key workers. The college's self-assessment report has identified the need for basic skills training for staff and a consultant has been engaged to undertake this. Staff development is promoted and there is a successful training ethos throughout the college. The college has recently introduced an ILT strategy that is beginning to be effective. Computers are used well by college staff and in the work settings to plan, review and record students' learning.

57. The communication needs of all the students are dealt with as individual needs arise; for

example, in the current year there are several students who use Makaton and all staff have undertaken initial training in the system. The college does not have a communication policy for the strategic development of such training. Staff are trained to use a variety of communication approaches but there is no overarching development programme to embed these skills for future student enrolment and staff development.

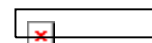
### ***Leadership and management***

58. Operational leadership and management are good. There is a strong commitment to staff training to ensure the provision meets individual students' needs but there is no clear strategic management for the robust and systematic development of a curriculum policy. The use of self-assessment to continuously improve provision is not fully understood by all staff.

59. The college has no formal agreements with local general FE colleges where a small number of students are placed. It is difficult to monitor how successful teaching arrangements are and support staff are relied upon to provide information on the provision. There are few arrangements for the sharing of good practice with the partner colleges.

60. Equality and diversity are very strongly promoted in relation to disability and gender but race equality promotion is underdeveloped.

### **Independent living skills**



Overall provision in this area is **outstanding (grade 1)**.

#### ***Strengths***

- outstanding achievement
- effective use of residences and the community for learning
- thorough assessment and recording
- outstanding and unobtrusive behaviour management
- very good communication between teaching and residential staff.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- underdeveloped strategic curriculum planning.

### ***Scope of provision***

61. The college's aim is to enable students to learn and develop skills for independence in their adult life. This is achieved by providing students with opportunities for greater independence in their daily living skills, developing increased social confidence and having greater involvement in the community. Independence skills are developed in the residential accommodation and through sporting, leisure and everyday activities in the local community. The curriculum includes activities such as planning meals, budgeting, shopping, cooking and routine domestic tasks carried out in the students' accommodation. It also enables students to learn about personal care, presentation and student advocacy. Day students follow the same curriculum. Students have the opportunity to develop their skills in arts and crafts and physical and outdoor pursuits, in the college and the wider community, during the day, evenings and weekends.

### ***Achievement and standards***

62. Students' achievement is outstanding. Most students achieve their long-term primary learning goals which are realistic, practical and equip them to achieve greater independence and autonomy in their everyday lives. Good use of baseline assessment ensures that individual students are set demanding and appropriate goals that enable them to develop and improve practical skills and increase in social confidence. For example, students make good use of public transport and learn to travel as independently as possible to college, work placements and to leisure and vocational activities. Travel time is also used as an opportunity to learn about punctuality, using money and keeping safe and to develop social confidence.

63. The students' work in the college and the community is of a very high standard. In lessons, students clearly demonstrate increased social confidence and develop skills of turn taking and listening to others. Students develop very good social skills and speak confidently about their achievements; for example, taking part in regional sports activities and being able to prepare a meal for their peers. Students learn to make choices about the leisure activities they wish to pursue. Students' communication skills are effectively developed alongside the individual acquisition of practical skills; for example, teachers asked them to explain why they were sorting out different coloured clothes before laundering them. There is a strong emphasis on developing self-advocacy skills and students speak up for themselves and others in a variety of situations; for example, in making choices and summarising what they have learned at the end of a lesson. Students are highly motivated and are happy at college. They attend regularly and punctually.

### ***Quality of education and training***

64. Teaching is good or better in the majority of the lessons and outstanding in some. Lessons are well planned and managed. Lesson plans clearly detail the sequence and nature of activities suited to individual needs and change over time as each small step is achieved. In the best lessons, students have demanding targets, and practical activities were very well-planned using a good range of learning activities in the residences and in the community. There is very good use of questioning by staff to check students' understanding. Most teaching in the community venues is very good and teachers use creative strategies to maximise the use of social situations. Some lessons take place over a whole day and activities are planned and sequenced to keep the interest of students and enable them to learn effectively. For example, one lesson to develop social skills involved students walking to the bus, travelling to a park, having a meal in the café, walking to a local landmark and photographing the autumn leaves and statues in the park. This enabled students to learn social skills in the appropriate environment as well as developing creative and photographic skills. At the end of lessons, students are encouraged to evaluate their own performance, identify strengths and make suggestions to improve their learning. Students make good progress in residential facilities where the learning takes place in a realistic context. The more able students are set more demanding tasks and are expected to complete these tasks unsupported. There is very good development of

communication skills and some good and relevant use of associated numeracy skills. For example, students plan, prepare and serve meals in the residences, choose the food to be provided for different sized groups of students, shop for ingredients, keep to mealtimes, provide a good quality of food and then wash the dishes and clean the kitchen. The good relationship between staff and students encourages the development of this co-operative working.

65. Good use of college resources promotes effective learning. High-quality accommodation for practising daily living activities enables students to succeed in learning about living more independently. Students learn to use household equipment properly and keep the residences clean. Staff are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their students. They are encouraged and eager to undertake updating and professional training, although not all have recent specialist qualifications. Staff take pride in enabling students to succeed in learning and become as independent as they can as rapidly as possible.

66. Baseline assessments are comprehensive and provide a sound basis to identify individual learning goals. Individual learning plans provide a range of learning goals that are used effectively to prioritise and measure individual students' progress. The systems to track and record students' progress against these individual goals are thorough. At the end of the lesson, there is a well-managed evaluation period that enables students to review their own performance with the staff and to make suggestions for the next lesson. The staff assessment of lessons and in the extended curriculum is very detailed and provides information that is used to contribute to regular monthly assessment meetings where students' progress is reviewed and evaluated. Any additional achievement, called special observations, that the students make is recorded by staff and used to inform the individual learning plan. One example of this was when a student had recognised that she had insufficient money to spend before a planned evening activity and suggested that she went to the post office to withdraw some money. Parents and carers are involved with drawing up students' individual learning plans and are expected to record progress when the students are at home.

67. Students are able to practise and extend their independent living skills in the college and the community. Activities to encourage choice and develop the individual students' strengths are promoted, for example, one student had taken part in athletics in his first year but decided that he wanted to go swimming and play basketball as an alternative. As students gain in confidence and develop skills, they attend provision in local general FE colleges. This enables them to develop further the skills they need for their future lives as well as learning about additional leisure activities, such as dance. The more able students are able to attend other institutions and participate in work experience to extend their experience.

68. Individual support for students is very good, as is induction. There is effective liaison between education and care staff. All staff work well with students to support their personal development and increase their social skills. Students are encouraged to speak confidently and to make their views known; for example, to say when they disagree with other students or staff. Students are assisted well by learner support staff; for example, one student was helped to tie his shoelaces. There is outstanding and unobtrusive behaviour management. There are individualised strategies that staff use to minimise the impact of inappropriate behaviour on other students' learning. Staff quickly and effectively support students by consistently using strategies that include re-directing and re-deploying students to ensure that over time challenging behaviour is reduced.

### ***Leadership and management***

69. Operational leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. Residential and teaching staff work effectively in teams to support learning throughout the extended curriculum. Team meetings take place regularly and clearly identify students' progress and there is good monitoring of the quality of the students' experience. However, there is no formal and comprehensive curriculum document that adequately sets out the curriculum framework. Staff are committed to continuing professional development. There are clear procedures for risk assessment. Strategic planning is underdeveloped. There is very good promotion of equality and diversity and disability but promotion of racial issues is underdeveloped.

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