

## Whitegates College, NoRSACA

### CONTENTS

---

#### [Basic information about the college](#)

#### [Part A: Summary](#)

##### [Information about the college](#)

##### [How effective is the college?](#)

##### [Key strengths](#)

##### [What should be improved](#)

##### [Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas](#)

##### [How well is the college led and managed?](#)

##### [To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?](#)

##### [How well are students and trainees guided and supported?](#)

##### [Students' view of the college](#)

##### [What students like about the college](#)

##### [What they feel could be improved](#)

##### [Other information](#)

#### [Part B: The college as a whole](#)

##### [Achievement and standards](#)

##### [Quality of teaching, training and learning](#)

##### [Leadership and management](#)

#### [Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas](#)

##### [Social and life skills](#)

[Strengths](#)

[Weaknesses](#)

[Scope of provision](#)

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

[Literacy, numeracy and communication](#)

[Strengths](#)

[Weaknesses](#)

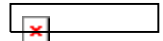
[Scope of provision](#)

[Achievement and standards](#)

[Quality of education and training](#)

[Leadership and management](#)

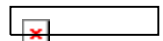
## Basic information about the college



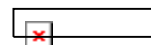
Name of college:	Whitegates College, NoRSACA
Type of college:	Independent, specialist, day college
Principal:	Karen Bulmer
Address of college:	The Dukeries Centre Park Street Worksop S80 1HH
Telephone number:	01909 509400
Fax number:	01909 488204
Chair of governors:	Antony Hayne
Reference number*:	517954
Name of reporting inspector:	Susan Preece HMI
Dates of inspection:	29 November-3 December 2004

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

## Part A: Summary



## Information about the college



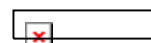
Whitegates College is an independent specialist day college that provides opportunities for educational, social and personal development for young people aged 16 to 25, all of whom have autistic spectrum disorders. Situated in the north Nottinghamshire town of Worksop, Whitegates College is part of the Nottingham Regional Society for Adults and Children with Autism (NoRSACA), a charity and registered company limited by guarantee. All students have moderate to severe learning difficulties in addition to autism. Although most students are local, a few travel significant distances to attend the college. These include the surrounding areas of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and south Yorkshire. Of the 21 students enrolled in September 2004, 13 were solely funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and social services fund the remaining eight students. Of the LSC-funded students, seven are aged 16 to 19 and six are aged 19 plus. The college provides programmes for 38 and 50 weeks a year. Most LSC-funded students receive 12 weeks additional funding support from social services to enable them to continue their attendance at the college throughout the year. Of the current students, two are female and two are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The college occupies part of a former primary school on the edge of Worksop and is within easy reach of shops and leisure facilities. In addition to the head of the college, there are five full-time tutors, two managers and eight learning support staff as well as administration and auxiliary staff. The college has undergone a management restructure within the past three months with the appointment of two managers who are referred to as advanced practitioners. The head of the college reports to the NoRSACA director of adult and further education (FE) services.

The college's curriculum framework is designed to enable students to gain self-confidence and self-awareness; develop literacy, numeracy and communication skills, social and interpersonal skills, independent living, coping and practical skills; and gain access to work placements and support and guidance. The curriculum is divided into two areas: literacy, numeracy and communication skills; and social and life skills. These areas are taught through small group activities, such as do it yourself, woodwork, personal development, newsletter, music and movement, work placements and independent living skills. Basic skills and information communication technology (ICT) and self-advocacy are integrated throughout the curriculum areas. Students' achievements and progress are measured through the use of a college programme, 'roots for growth and development'. There is also the opportunity for all students to work towards an Open College Network (OCN) accredited programme.

The college aims to create a realistic learning environment which promotes students' development into adulthood. The mission of the college is 'to develop skills and knowledge for learners with autism'.

## How effective is the college?



The overall quality of provision is inadequate. The curriculum areas of social and life skills and literacy, numeracy and communication are unsatisfactory. The care, support and behaviour needs of students are adequately met but it is not possible to accurately identify achievements for many students. Assessment processes are inadequate. Activities and programmes are insufficient to match the needs of the more able students. The overall standard of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Whilst improvements and developments have been made since the last inspection in

December 2002, leadership and management remain unsatisfactory.

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

**Key strengths**

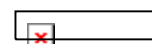
- effective development of students' confidence
- skilled management of students' behaviour
- committed and supportive governors.

**What should be improved**

- the achievement levels of all students
- the quality of teaching and planning for learning
- the initial and baseline assessment processes
- the setting and monitoring of targets
- the effectiveness of quality assurance
- the coherence and management of the curriculum.

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

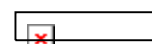
**Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas**



*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)*

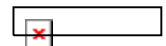
Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Social and life skills	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> The quality of teaching is poor; students' abilities and future learning needs are not adequately assessed or recorded. Targets are too broad and generalised and are not effectively monitored or reviewed. Lesson planning is inadequate and curriculum planning is underdeveloped. Staff are skilled in the management of students' behaviour and students make significant gains in confidence.
Literacy, numeracy and communication	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> There is much unsatisfactory teaching of literacy and numeracy and staff have insufficient specialist teaching expertise. The setting of targets and monitoring of students' progress is unsatisfactory. Students have insufficient opportunities for literacy and numeracy development. Staff provide good support for the development of students' communication skills.

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



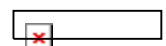
Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Whilst there have been significant developments and progress since the last inspection, these have not had enough impact to bring about improvements to teaching and learning. A three-year strategic plan has been recently developed which effectively sets out the future vision and development of the college. Action planning is insufficiently related to the improvement of teaching. There is an inappropriate focus on the development of systems at the expense of quality. Assessment, target setting and the monitoring of students' progress remain unsatisfactory. The self-assessment process and quality assurance procedures do not bring about the required outcomes. Governors take an active interest and have a strong commitment to the college. However, they have been slow to acknowledge the management of change needed in all areas to bring about the required improvements. Whilst the building alterations represent a significant investment in the college, the appointment of well-qualified and experienced specialist staff has been slow. Financial arrangements are sound. Overall, the college does not provide value for money.

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



The college's response to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory overall. Most of the students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities in addition to autistic spectrum disorders. Two students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 2 of the 21 students are female. Students are encouraged to advocate for themselves and to make choices and they feel respected and valued. There are good relationships with the local community which provide students with effective and realistic opportunities to develop their social, personal and communication skills. The college does not offer key skills; the provision for literacy and numeracy is unsatisfactory. The college's equal opportunities policy is comprehensive and issues relating to equal opportunities are satisfactorily addressed, although the college's response to gender and sexuality is underdeveloped. Staff effectively challenge bullying and harassment and racial stereotypes if they occur. Opportunities for students to gain employability skills are not adequate. Part of the college's accommodation has recently been altered, refurbished to a good standard and is accessible for people with restricted mobility. The college is compliant with child protection procedures and the requirements of Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) but has been slow in responding to its duties under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. Staff have had little training in the implication of recent legislation for their practice.

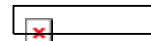
### **How well are students and trainees guided and supported?**



Guidance and support are satisfactory overall with good personal support for students. Staff provide good support for the development of students' communication skills. An effective focus of improving students' behaviour enables most young people to successfully make gains in confidence and so improve their achievements. Induction and transition arrangements are planned around the individual requirements of the student. The outcomes of initial assessments are not used effectively to determine students' learning programme and individual educational targets. Communication between the teaching and learning support staff is satisfactory but there are missed opportunities to make effective use of the support available. Too few chances are available for students to develop vocational and employment skills. Support arrangements provide access, although limited, to specialist interventions such as speech and language therapy and psychological and psychiatric guidance. An enhanced tutorial system has been effectively implemented and all students now have a personal tutor. Advice from Connexions personal advisors is successfully used to inform the

annual review process.

## Students' view of the college



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

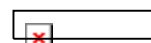
### *What students like about the college*

- lessons
- travelling independently
- food
- staff
- help with problems
- new building alterations
- attending a 'proper' college
- fewer interruptions to lessons than before
- student forum.

### *What they feel could be improved*

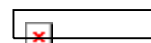
- bigger portions of food
- desserts after dinner
- more work towards certificates and qualifications.

## Other information



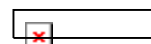
The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college's action plan must show what action 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 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. There are no differences in standards and achievements between the provision for students aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19 plus. Students of all ages and funding streams are taught together in five small groups based on their level of ability.

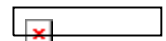
2. Many students make good progress with managing their behaviours; they develop satisfactory communication skills and become more confident in both familiar and new settings. For example, a student with significant behavioural problems progressed from being timid and anxious in the presence of strangers to gaining enough confidence to ask questions and greet visitors to the college. Students with limited verbal skills use Makaton signing with confidence and purpose to effectively get their message across. However, most students do not make the progress they are capable of in literacy and numeracy and in social and life skills. At present, no students attend courses in local general FE colleges or with other education providers.

3. The formal recognition of students' achievements is underdeveloped. Some students are working towards level 1 units in OCN, skills for independent living and vocational progression. Two students are working towards a unit at entry level in this award. Access to an appropriate range of national awards is unsatisfactory. It is not always possible to accurately identify the LSC-funded students' educational achievements. Within college, students' accomplishments are celebrated through displays, tutorials, an annual award ceremony, internal certification, student diaries and during the weekly student forum where those who have made the most significant progress are recognised as 'star achievers'.

4. The outcomes of assessment and planning do not provide adequate information upon which to develop precise and meaningful individual learning targets. Targets are too general and do not provide sufficient detail upon which to assess or measure progress effectively. In one group, no member of staff was able to identify targets for individual students. Individual learning plans are insufficiently comprehensive. They do not adequately identify clear meaningful steps for students in order for them to prepare for the next stage in their life.

5. Retention rates are high, averaging 95% over the past three years, and this is in line with other specialist colleges. Punctuality to lessons is good. During the week of inspection the attendance rate was 93%. Whilst destination data are recorded, they are not effectively analysed or used to inform curriculum development. Progression routes are limited. Many students, on completion of their three-year programme funded by the LSC, continue at Whitegates funded by social services until age 25. When students do leave, most go into local community day care provision. No students have entered into open or sheltered employment over past three years.

### **Quality of teaching, training and learning**



6. The quality of teaching and learning in social and life skills and in literacy and numeracy is unsatisfactory. The poor teaching is characterised by insufficiently qualified and experienced staff, limited planning, inadequate assessment processes and insufficient recording of students' achievement.

7. In many lessons, students were repeating much of what they had done many times before. There is too much emphasis on whole group activity instead of individually designed tasks to extend learning and provide suitable levels of challenge for the more able students. Lesson planning in the area of independent living skills was poor. There was an inappropriate emphasis on generically planned lessons for all five groups, where all students were expected to plan, shop, cook and eat, and then tidy up afterwards. All of the five student groups prepared pizza regardless of their ability or interest. In the less successful lessons, learning support staff were poorly deployed. Much emphasis was inappropriately placed on paper-based activities. For example, in one lesson students were playing a game of identifying tools from symbols and then glueing and sticking these

symbols onto worksheets at the expense of the spoken work. There was no rationale for this activity as the students had previously identified the real objects.

8. In the better lessons, activities are individualised to match students' abilities. For example, in one lesson a more able student was responsible for researching and selecting recipes, sometimes using the internet. He then wrote a shopping list and costed both his own purchases and the whole meal for all students. In the same lesson, students with greater learning difficulties were asked simply to write their own list of one or two items and to shop for these. They were then asked to add two items together, and to count and check their change against their receipts.

9. Most tutors lack the specialist knowledge and experience needed to plan effectively and extend students learning. The aims of many lessons and the students' objectives for learning lack detail and coherence. Lesson planning does not sequentially build upon students' skills and prior learning nor does it regularly reflect the skills students will require for their future lives. For example, in one lesson, there were two students whose written work was above the entry level of the programme but their general knowledge was not sufficiently exploited. Personal interest activities, in which students visit places of their own choosing, are not used effectively to develop literacy and numeracy skills. However, staff are skilled and consistent in their approach to dealing with students' challenging behaviours through the effective development and implementation of clear strategies.

10. Students are not adequately helped to monitor their own progress or to know how to successfully improve their own performance. Many of the comments that staff make on students' work do not enable them to know what they need to do to improve. Some of these comments contain spelling and grammatical mistakes and on one occasion a teacher used mixed case writing on the white board. This error was highlighted by the more able students. There are good relationships between staff and students which fosters learning. Staff know students well and students feel happy and trust the staff. Equality of opportunity is adequate and involves the promotion of cultural issues, although issues relating to gender stereotyping and sexuality are not sufficiently promoted.

11. Within the past two years there has been a high staff turnover. There is a lack of sufficiently qualified and experienced teachers who understand the impact of autistic spectrum disorders on learning and the stages of students' development. Most staff do not have an adequate understanding about how to teach literacy and numeracy. Teaching materials are generally adequate although there are insufficient practical resources for teaching numeracy and ICT. Access to appropriate software for the more able students is limited. A college-wide intranet to improve communication across the college is being developed. The college has recently competed successfully with other independent specialist colleges to secure LSC funding for information technology (IT) technical support. Although students and staff now have access to IT, limited use is made of this resource for teaching. The use of alternative and augmentative communication systems, such as signs and symbols, is satisfactory.

12. Following a major renovation and refurbishment of part of the accommodation earlier this year, the building is bright and airy. Improvements include additional classrooms, a meeting room and an ICT suite. The accommodation for some practical activities, such as cooking and the changing area for music and movement, remains inadequate. There is insufficient specialist accommodation for meeting a minority of students' personal care needs. However, the second phase of the refurbishment, planned for 2005, incorporates new and more suitable resources. A good range of displays around the college are age appropriate and include examples of students' achievements. Comprehensive health and safety risk assessments are in place and include group activities and individual risk assessments for students with specific needs. However, external lighting is poor and the paths around the college are uneven. Good use continues to be made of the town and surrounding countryside as a learning resource where students can further develop their social skills and ability to make choices.

13. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are unsatisfactory. The initial assessment of students' abilities and future needs in social and life skills remains inadequate. Although good diagnostic assessments for literacy, numeracy and communication are successfully shared with other staff, these outcomes are not effectively used to develop meaningful targets. Overall, initial

assessment procedures are not comprehensive and lack specialist multi-disciplinary contributions with which to inform students' individual programmes. The outcomes of baseline assessments are not specific and do not provide adequate detailed information upon which to develop precise and meaningful individual learning targets. Staff do not rigorously monitor students' educational progress and, consequently, individual learning targets are not adequately defined, assessed or recorded. There is little planning for sequential learning or recording of progress against milestones for learning. Whilst staff do formally review progress with students at the end of each lesson, the process lacks rigour and is not effectively used to assist with the planning of future lessons. The self-assessment report recognises that assessment and internal moderation are in need of development and further improvement.

14. The curriculum, and students' individual learning plans, are insufficiently developed and are not effectively integrated between care and education. The range of options is too narrow to enable students to progress to other courses. Often the generic individual objectives of lessons and the skills and knowledge of individual students are poorly matched to the 'roots for growth and development' programme. Some teaching groups have insufficient opportunities to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Students, particularly the most able students, are not given work which is at the level that they require. There is a lack of opportunity for students to gain national awards where these would be appropriate. For example, one student with very good spelling and punctuation skills but poor organisation of writing did not have access to an appropriate course to further develop his skills. Whilst the college is involved with a local project for work experience, only a minority of students are currently benefiting from these links. There are effective celebrations of other cultures such as Diwali and a food festival covering several regions of the world. Opportunities for students to develop the skills to live in sheltered accommodation, to experience realistic work placements and to attend other FE providers are underdeveloped. Students have access to personal interest groups and lunch-break activities which provide them with opportunities to practise their skills relating to choice, the selection of food items, and improving their knowledge of current affairs. Recent improvements made in response to suggestions from the student forum have included the purchase of more educational games.

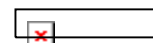
15. Guidance and support are satisfactory. There is good personal support for students. The college values its links with families and maintains regular contact through the use of student diaries and regular phone calls. Contact at the start of each day between personal tutors and students ensure that any concerns and preferences are dealt with as they arise. However, the outcomes of initial assessments are not effectively used to determine students' learning programmes and educational targets. Induction and transition arrangements are planned around the individual requirements of the student. Attendance and punctuality to lessons are good and effective procedures are in place to monitor these areas. Where difficulties are identified, they are swiftly and sensitively addressed.

16. Staff provide satisfactory support for the development of students' communication skills. All students are involved with the students' forum and learning support staff successfully enable students who are non-verbal to make contributions to this group. However, there are many lost opportunities to make effective use of the support available as some teachers do not provide clear guidance or adequate direction for learning support staff during lessons. For example, the deployment of learning support staff in literacy and numeracy lessons is not always well managed. There are not always sufficient numbers of staff to provide the level of support that is identified in individual learner schedules. Students with additional needs, many of whom are not funded by the LSC, sometimes obtain disproportionately more support from staff and hinder the achievements of others in the group.

17. Since the advanced practitioners have been in post, an enhanced tutorial system has been effectively implemented and all students now have a personal tutor. Students have responded well to this and are more confident to communicate their feelings and make choices. The arrangements for specialist assessment, both prior to being offered a place at the college and during the six-week initial assessment period, are unsatisfactory. Support arrangements provide access, although limited, to specialist interventions such as speech and language therapy and psychiatric and psychological advice. The speech and language therapists, employed for the equivalent of one day per week, are actively engaged in supporting staff and individual students with specifically designed communication strategies. There are no arrangements for the students to receive counselling.

Screening for dyslexia has recently been undertaken with one student but there is no access to full dyslexia assessment or support for students who need this extra help. Guidance from Connexions personal advisors is successfully used to inform the annual review process and to help staff work with students to plan their transition from college. The policies and procedures for child protection and vulnerable adults are satisfactory but a minority of staff are not fully aware of the correct reporting system and their responsibilities in this area.

## Leadership and management



18. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The many changes made since the last inspection have not yet had sufficient impact on students' learning. A three-year strategic plan has been developed which effectively sets out the future vision and development of the college. Action planning is insufficiently related to improving teaching and learning and there is an inappropriate focus on the development of procedures, with insufficient regard to how well students learn. The college management team and staff have worked hard to implement the objectives in the development plan. However, insufficient progress has been made on improving the many weaknesses which were identified in the last inspection.

19. Quality assurance processes and procedures are ineffective. Since the previous inspection, a quality assurance framework has been implemented; monthly observations of both teaching and learning support provide staff with feedback about their performance, targets are set for improvement and appropriate development put in place. The arrangements by advanced practitioners to support inexperienced teaching staff in their role are good. However, this rigorous monitoring has not yet improved the quality of teaching and learning. The quality framework does not adequately ensure improvement in students' achievement. Regular appraisal processes are in place. Performance management of staff is well established and improvement targets link to the college's strategic plan. These targets are not always sufficiently demanding for staff at all levels and those that are set are not adequately reviewed for their effectiveness. The self-assessment process has improved since the last inspection. All staff are involved and the report is internally validated by directors and the management committee. The self-assessment report does not relate sufficiently to the common inspection framework. The college is insufficiently self-critical and the grades awarded were not reflected in the outcome of the inspection. Regular feedback is sought from families, the majority of whom consider the college to be very supportive and caring. Although teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, this remains unsatisfactory overall.

20. A wide range of staff training and development opportunities are provided. Whilst these can be linked back to staff appraisal outcomes, they do not bring about the desired improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Measures have been put into place since the start of September for the two advanced practitioners to support and mentor all teaching staff but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these developments. However, the college does not evaluate whether these training and development opportunities contribute to improved teaching and learning for students. Most staff have an insufficient understanding of students' intellectual development and the impact that the social use of language has upon students' learning.

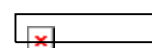
21. The overall operational management of the college is effective. The college does not regularly monitor or audit the students' individual learning programme and their support requirements as specified in the LSC individual learner schedules. The management team has been restructured since the last inspection. Well-qualified and experienced advanced practitioners have recently been appointed to manage the curriculum and learning support. The aim of these changes was to place teaching and learning at the core of college activity. Recent beneficial changes for the students include the establishment of personal tutor groups, an enhanced tutorial system and an improvement in the processes and procedures used to determine students' educational progress and achievements. A recent review of the curriculum provision has resulted in students being grouped according to their learning aims and individual support needs. However, it is too soon to

judge the effectiveness of these changes on raising achievement. The management of the curriculum has improved since the last inspection but has not developed sufficiently to provide each student with an effective and comprehensive individual learning pathway. There remains an over-emphasis on behavioural aspects of a student's programme. A range of policies are now in place which relate to all aspects of the students' experience. Some of these are not dated, but most are reviewed as needed during senior management meetings. Detailed management information is collated centrally, but this information is not analysed or used to inform decision making about the students' experience in the college.

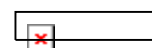
22. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory overall. The students' awareness of equality and diversity issues begins at induction and is reinforced during their programme through a range of activities. Students are made aware of cultural diversity through work on religious festivals, teaching activities and resources and enrichment activities. Staff are aware of issues relating to disability and the need to promote self-advocacy but the promotion of issues relating to gender and sexuality is underdeveloped. While senior managers have undergone some relevant equality and diversity training, this has not been devolved across the organisation to increase staff awareness. The strategic plan identifies the college's commitment to eliminating racial discrimination and harassment. There are effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour including all forms of harassment. Complaints are handled fairly and in good time and reviewed by senior managers and the management committee. The college is compliant with child protection procedures and the requirements of SENDA but has been slow in responding to its duties under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. Staff have had little training in the implication of recent legislation for their practice.

23. The arrangements for governance are good. Within the past two years, NoRSACA management committee has established a governors sub-committee to further support and guide the development of the college. Governors are very familiar with the college and are realistic about its strengths and weaknesses. However, they have been slow to acknowledge the management of change required to move the focus of the provision to teaching and learning and appoint staff with the required teaching expertise and qualifications. The college's budget is set and approved by the main council. The financial arrangements are sound. Overall, the college does not provide value for money.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Social and life skills



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

#### **Strengths**

- good gains in students' confidence
- skilled management of students' behaviour.

#### **Weaknesses**

- poor target setting and monitoring
- poor teaching
- inadequate assessments

- underdeveloped curriculum planning.

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

24. The 13 LSC-funded students are on a three-year day programme working towards increasing their social and life skills. Students are taught in five ability levels in groups of four or five, which also contain students funded by social services. The programmes includes personal and social education, independent living skills, do it yourself and woodwork, environment and community access, personal interest activities and sport and movement. All students take part in these subjects and they are taught within the college. The areas all involve the use of local community facilities and aim to promote students' independence and develop their social and life skills. At present, none of the students attend provision outside the college.

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

25. Students' achievements overall are unsatisfactory. Recording of achievement is inconsistent and is not sufficiently precise to measure the students' learning. In social and life skills most students make progress against behavioural targets and in some areas of literacy, numeracy and communication. Many students make significant gains in personal confidence that enables them to have more control over their lives. For example, making choices and increasing their ability to undertake progressive steps in independent travel.

26. The teaching does not provide sufficiently challenging opportunities to extend learning for the more able students or to develop the skills of students who have more complex needs. There are few opportunities for students to gain knowledge and experience in an appropriate range of vocational subjects and activities. There are limited opportunities to develop work-related skills to increase their chances of gaining supported employment. The learning of some of the students with more complex needs is hindered by the complexity of the tasks teachers plan for them. For example, too often students whose literacy skills are very poor are given text-based work sheets to complete. Teachers often use language which can be patronising or too abstract for the students to understand.

27. Most students do not have sufficient opportunities to achieve challenging learning goals by being given tasks that would extend their learning. Students' skills are recognised and celebrated through a very limited range of OCN modules in skills for independent living and vocational progression and college internal certificates. There are currently no opportunities for students to obtain additional external or vocational awards.

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

28. The majority of teaching is unsatisfactory. Too many lessons are based on whole-group activities and do not involve the use of a sufficiently wide range of teaching and learning methods. For example, in one class a target for all students was 'to enjoy a walk'. Lesson plans often contain tasks and activities that apply to all levels of students, regardless of their ability and individual learning needs. For example, all of the five groups of students attend independent living skills classes, in which all students are engaged in the same activities. They plan a meal, shop for the ingredients, cook and eat the meal and then tidy up. In these lessons, students sometimes develop skills such as choosing the meal. However, insufficient attention is given to matching the individual learning needs of students. As a consequence, some students are practising and rehearsing skills they have previously learned whilst others are not given sufficient support to develop and extend the skills that they need for the future.

29. In too many lessons, teachers are overly directive. In some lessons, learning support staff complete tasks that had been set for students. Frequently, teachers do not give students sufficient time to consider and develop their responses before they intervene. For example, in some practical activities, staff did not allow sufficient time for students to finish their work before intervening and doing the tasks for them. In one class, when a student had difficulty completing a questionnaire he finally wrote down the answer a member of staff gave him. In some lessons, teachers posed

thought-provoking questions but then answered the question themselves.

30. The individual learning plans are underdeveloped and do not adequately inform teaching and learning. The goals and targets are not sufficiently specific or detailed for teachers to plan for the students' individual learning needs. For example, one student's overall aim was to 'develop independent living skills and further develop skills in IT'. There are too few subject-specific targets in individual learning plans that are used in lesson plans, and those that are identified are too broad. Some students are unable to fully participate in the lessons. The recording and monitoring of progress on individual learning plans is inadequate.

31. Teachers do not evaluate the outcomes of lessons effectively. The daily evaluations, involving students and staff, consist mainly of descriptions of what they have done, rather than what they have learned. Teachers record general comments about the whole class activity and so insufficient attention is given to individual students' progress in developing specific social and life skills. These evaluations do not routinely inform the planning for subsequent lessons, thus hindering students' progress. In their diaries, students describe what they have done during the day. Teachers' written comments on students' work do not always help students to understand what they have achieved and what they need to do in order to improve. The satisfactory teaching occurred in practical lessons that were more varied. These included better-planned activities that enabled individual students to develop appropriate skills such as making choices and developing their social interaction skills.

32. The quality of resources is variable. Teachers lack the specialist teaching skills required to meet the needs of students with autistic spectrum disorders. The lack of this expertise has a detrimental impact on planning, teaching and learning. Some poorly produced and sometimes inappropriate handouts, such as text-based worksheets, inhibit learning. Staff make limited use of IT during lessons. The main accommodation has recently been refurbished and is attractive and welcoming. The main hall which is used for teaching, leisure and catering activities is light and airy and provides a suitably adult environment. The ICT room has recently been equipped but is too small for some of the classes that use it. Some accommodation is poor; for example, the kitchen used for teaching cookery is too cramped for the class size. The changing area outside the sensory room is inadequate. There are some uneven surfaces on walkways around buildings and the site is poorly lit.

33. Teachers meet regularly but the outcomes of their meetings have limited impact on improving teaching and learning. Teachers review students' behaviour targets but do not plan effectively to meet their specific personal and social, independence and pre-vocational development needs. There are limited specialist contributions to inform initial assessment. Staff are often unclear about individual students' starting points on which to plan individual learning programmes. Whilst the baseline information is adequate in the assessment of students' literacy and numeracy skills, it does not take sufficient account of the students' existing social and life skills, and any additional qualifications. Pre-entry and baseline assessment do not take sufficient account of students' prior learning. Hence, the setting of effective and appropriate objectives and the reporting and recording of progress are not consistent for all students.

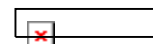
34. Support and guidance for students are satisfactory. Personal support for students is good. Staff are skilled at helping students to manage their behaviour effectively. A limited range of multi-disciplinary professionals, such as speech and language therapists, support staff in their work with a small number of students. Support staff are given general directions by teachers during lessons. Teachers do not provide sufficiently detailed guidance and appropriate management that would enable these staff to provide the support needed for individualised activities matched to students' specific learning needs. As a result, some students do not have their interests effectively met and in some lessons students easily become bored and distracted.

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

35. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is a comprehensive strategic plan which has yet to impact on the quality of teaching and learning. There is no clear and comprehensive curriculum framework. The individual needs of students are not effectively met. The arrangements

to review and evaluate the curriculum are underdeveloped. The self-assessment process and subsequent report is not comprehensive and does not accurately reflect inspectors' judgements. However, the report does acknowledge some of the deficiencies in the curriculum framework. Systems have been established to monitor and assess the quality of teaching and learning through regular observations. This process has yet to impact on improving lessons. Overall, the promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum is adequate, but issues relating to sexuality and gender are underdeveloped.

## **Literacy, numeracy and communication**



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

### ***Strengths***

- good support for the development of communication skills.

### ***Weaknesses***

- much unsatisfactory teaching
- insufficient specialist teaching expertise
- unsatisfactory target setting and monitoring of students' progress
- insufficient opportunities for literacy and numeracy development.

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

36. The 13 LSC-funded students are on a three-year non-residential programme. Students are taught in five ability levels in groups of four or five, which also contain students funded by social services. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and communications is embedded across the curriculum. Students also attend discrete provision. Learning support staff are allocated to four out of five groups. Students work towards OCN accreditation or internal certificates of achievement at entry level and level 1. At present, none of the students attends provision outside the college.

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

37. Students make satisfactory progress in communication skills. Their ability to communicate in speech and signing develops over time and they extend their use of symbols, pictures and signs to express choices and opinions. Students become able to work co-operatively, helping each other and listening to each other. They can respond with pleasure to other students' humorous remarks. In one lesson, students made verbal presentations to each other, and demonstrated good speaking and listening skills. Students make insufficient progress in literacy and numeracy development. Students with higher-level numeracy skills do not extend their abilities. Others do not improve spelling, punctuation or the organisation of their writing sufficiently.

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

38. Teaching of literacy and numeracy has improved but remains unsatisfactory. Teachers do not plan sufficiently for students' individual needs. In one lesson, the use of a video recording on holiday venues was rendered less effective by the absence of a template for two students to record their findings. In curriculum areas, students produce a written record of each lesson but most teachers do not use this to develop spelling, punctuation or sentence structure. Opportunities to extend students' numeracy skills, such as estimating money, distance or time, are missed. In discrete lessons, stimulating activities are planned and there is greater use of audio and video recordings. Literacy and numeracy are satisfactorily incorporated into food preparation lessons with activities geared to

individual students' needs and abilities. Teaching of communication skills is satisfactory across most areas of the curriculum. Teachers and learning support staff help students to listen, ask questions, make eye contact and respond to each other and staff. Students have clear communication targets which all staff are aware of and reinforce regularly. However, some teachers use their voices inappropriately in communication lessons with students with complex needs. Some staff adopt a heavily inflected, exaggerated tone more suited to small children.

39. Overall, staff have insufficient specialist teaching expertise. Too few teachers have sufficient understanding of literacy and numeracy to plan work to extend students' skills. Most are not trained or qualified teachers. Still fewer are specialist basic skills teachers. In a number of cases, the staff demonstrated literacy and numeracy skills that were not adequate. Worksheets, notices and comments on students' work often contain errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar which are sometimes commented on by more advanced students. There are insufficient practical resources to reinforce teaching of weights and measures outside food preparation lessons. In one lesson, there were not enough dictionaries, atlases or holiday brochures to enable all students to participate effectively. No software is available to extend the numeracy skills of the more able students or those of less advanced students who prefer on-line work. However, some teachers produce clear, well-designed learning materials and are skilled at using signs, symbols and graphics to aid communication with students.

40. Target setting and monitoring of students' progress are unsatisfactory. Diagnostic assessment is used well to identify specific areas for development. Personal tutors then use this information to produce students' targets for the year which are then circulated to all staff. However, these targets are frequently too broad to give teachers any indication of what to work on nor are they useful to measure progress. One student had a target for literacy 'to improve his basic skills' and another for numeracy 'to improve his use of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division'. Some targets are expressed in the language of the core curricula and are not easily understood by students or staff. Many reviews of progress against targets are scheduled only for the end of the academic year. Although teachers evaluate students' progress at the end of each lesson, and college managers intend interim reviews to take place at half-termly intervals, some staff remain confused about the frequency of progress reviews. Written feedback to students on a weekly basis is inconsistent. While a few teachers make constructive critical comments on the way students write lesson evaluations, others provide little guidance on how to improve writing.

41. The programme for literacy and numeracy does not adequately meet the needs of students. There are insufficient opportunities for students in two of the groups to improve their skills. One group of students have only two discrete lessons weekly whilst those in another group have only one discrete lesson per week. Students with some areas of skill at level 1 or above are not sufficiently challenged. The embedding of literacy and numeracy within the curriculum areas is at a very early stage of development. Staff skills and understanding are not adequate to provide an integrated curriculum. The range of opportunities for students to take national awards, when appropriate, is not wide enough to meet different students' needs and abilities.

42. Support arrangements provide access, although limited, to specialist interventions such as speech and language therapy and psychological and psychiatric guidance. A successful tutorial system has recently been introduced and all students now have a personal tutor. Advice from Connexions personal advisors is used effectively to inform the annual review process. Personal support for students is good. However, some aspects of support in the area of literacy and numeracy are inadequate. For example, there are not always sufficient numbers of staff to provide the level of support identified as required for individual students. Teachers do not always ensure that support staff work constructively with individual students while they are occupied with other members of the group. Screening for dyslexia has recently been undertaken with one student but there is no access to full dyslexia assessment or support. Overall, learning support staff are skilled at helping students to develop their communication skills with a range of methods, including signing.

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

43. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Despite strategic planning and considerable effort by management, many weaknesses identified at the last inspection remain. Managers have

worked hard to bring about improvements with the help of external consultants, the appointment of specialist advanced practitioners and the designation of a member of staff as a specialist basic skills teacher. Extensive quality assurance measures identify where improvements are required. However, there is insufficient focus on the structure and content of the embedded curriculum. With the absence of sufficient trained and qualified teaching specialists, the provision remains inadequate. Despite some examples of students' research into cultural festivals such as Diwali, awareness of equality of opportunity issues among staff is underdeveloped.

---

© Crown copyright 2005. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced verbatim without adaptation, and the source and date of publication are stated.  
Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

