



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



## Homefield College

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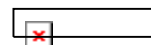
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## Basic information about the college

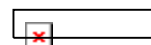


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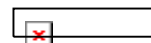
Name of college:	Homefield College
Type of college:	Independent specialist residential college
Principal:	Mr Chris Berry
Address of college:	42 St Mary's Road Sileby Leicestershire LE12 7TL
Telephone number:	01509 815696
Fax number:	01509 815696
Chair of governors:	N/A
Company number:	04956068
Name of reporting inspector:	Diane Stacey
Dates of inspection:	7-11 February 2005

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

## Part A: Summary



## Information about the college

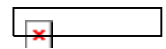


Homefield College was established in 1987 as an independent long-term residential provision for people with autistic spectrum disorders and /or learning difficulties. It was privately-owned until the end of 2003. The long-term residents, funded by Social Services, are now accommodated in six houses in the local village. The organisation is now a 'not-for-profit' limited company with plans to become a registered charity. In 1996 the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) began funding students to attend the college on two or three-year courses. The college campus building is situated on a residential estate in the large village of Sileby, which is six miles south of Loughborough and about ten miles north of Leicester. The college also provides accommodation for four students funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) on a residential estate in an urban area about seven miles from the college. Homefield College has broadened its provision to include day places during the last five years. There are 26 LSC funded students in total. Currently 19 residential students are accommodated on the college campus site and in the off-campus house and there are seven day students. The college's resources include a horticultural enterprise and a shop in the local village as well as a rented house used as a base for day students. There are links with three local general further education (FE) colleges. All residential accommodation is subject to inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI).

The student population has changed to incorporate those young people with more complex communication difficulties and more severe learning difficulties. Approximately three-quarters of the student population display autistic traits and some display behaviour that challenges. Day students travel from Leicestershire and Warwickshire, whilst current residential students are mostly from the East Midlands, West Midlands and the Home Counties. The gender balance of LSC-funded students starting at the college has changed over the past five years and there is now a more balanced gender mix. Some 12% of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The mission statement for the college is 'to empower its students to achieve maximum personal independence, through the provision of a high quality learning environment which enables them to acquire the independent living, social, personal and where appropriate, vocational skills which match their individual needs and expectations'.

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



The quality of teaching is good overall and the standards of students' achievements are very good, particularly in relation to communications. Improvements in students' self-confidence are outstanding. Provision is good in literacy, numeracy and communication and also in pre-vocational and social and life skills. Support and guidance for students are good.

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

#### ***Key strengths***

- the very good achievement of students
  
- the quality of the teaching
  
- monitoring and tracking of students' progress
  
- the fully embedded curriculum for literacy, numeracy and communication
  
- individual programmes
  
- the guidance and personal support provided for students
  
- leadership and management of the college

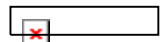
- quality assurance of key processes
- the promotion of equality of opportunity.

**What should be improved**

- some aspects of target setting
- specialist assessment at the pre-admission stage
- risk assessments for work placements
- full compliance with safeguarding legislation.

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**

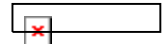


*The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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
Literacy, numeracy and communication	Good: There is very good achievement of students' communication skills and good teaching in literacy, numeracy and communication. The resources are good and the fully embedded curriculum is very effective. There is occasionally some inappropriate target setting. There is insufficient specialist assessment on pre-admission assessment visits.
Pre-vocational and social and life skills	Good: Very good achievement and outstanding improvements in self confidence through carefully planned activities. Teaching and learning are good as is the management of students' behaviour. Students are

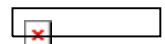
	very well supported and their progress is monitored and assessed very thoroughly. Risk assessments are not always carried out for work placements and for a few students, organisation of individual timetables are inappropriate.
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### How well is the college led and managed?



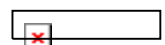
Leadership and management are good. The principal and senior staff provide effective leadership of the college towards its aim of increasing students' independence. Day to day college management is also good and is well supported by close team work and good communication between all staff. Quality assurance is good. Important aspects of planning are routinely monitored. Detailed information is used to monitor how well individual students are learning, but is not yet used to evaluate the whole provision. Self-assessment procedures are well established; evaluations are largely accurate and lead to improvements. The staff development programme is successful. There is good regard for promoting and ensuring equality of opportunity and diversity, and the requirements of legislation are met. Financial planning and management are sound; the link with self-assessment priorities is improving. The college provides good value for money.

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



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The college takes students from a wide area of England who have significant learning difficulties and also have communication difficulties, including Asperger's Syndrome and autistic spectrum disorders, or challenging behaviour. A few students have additional mobility or sensory difficulties. Of the 26 students funded by the LSC there is almost an equal number of male and female; approximately 12 % are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Students' ages range from 16 to 22, but only a small minority of students are aged 16 to 18 years. The promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity is good. Students' views are well represented in self-assessment although they are not represented on management groups. The college fulfils the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) (2001). Educational inclusion is good. Each student has a carefully considered programme designed to help them to make progress towards their likely future placements and in line with their interests. A small number of students do not have the full range of specialist support they require. Provision for literacy and numeracy is good. Key skills are not taught. Social inclusion is very good, particularly through the range of work experience placements and the additional activities available in the evenings and at weekends. There is good use made of the local community for learning.

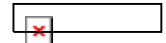
### How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance are good. Students receive very good personal support from their tutors and, more broadly, from all members of staff. This contributes very successfully to improving their personal and social skills. Identification of and support for meeting students' individual needs by the use of specialist staff is satisfactory. The provision of speech and language therapy is now good. A

impairment. Induction for new students is successful. Information for parents about how well students are making progress is good. There is an effective link with the local Connexions service. Any problems with punctuality or attendance are quickly noticed and successful action is taken to resolve any difficulties. The college does not fulfil all aspects of safeguarding legislation since not all staff who work with students aged below 19 have been trained in recognising abuse. However, all staff interviewed during inspection were aware of the name of designated person with responsibility for this area of work.

### **Students' view of the college**



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

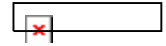
#### ***What students like about the college***

- swimming and football
  
- working in the shop
  
- horticulture
  
- the Tuesday club
  
- staff support
  
- making friends
  
- coming back to college after holidays.

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

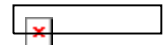
- nothing.

## Other information

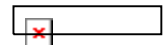


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college's action plan must show what action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

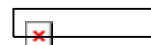


### Achievement and standards



1. Retention rates are good and comparable with the other colleges in the independent specialist college sector. Of those students who did not complete their course over the past two years, two left as a result of personal safety issues and one was withdrawn by parental request.
2. Achievements for students are very good with the majority of students meeting long-term goals, which are demanding and appropriate to their individual needs. Students make good progress in relation to targets identified in their individual learning plans. Where appropriate, students are entered for and achieve national awards and qualifications, for example; in literacy and numeracy, preparing for employment, open college network, essential skills awards and national proficiency tests in vocational areas.
3. The development of social and life skills are very good with the majority of students making significant progress with their behaviour. Students also make significant improvements in self-confidence especially in their ability to communicate effectively. For example, students were involved in a celebration of the Chinese New Year, culminating in a performance of a dragon dance and a song with Makaton signing. They performed this confidently and with pride. Long established links with a local swimming club provide students with further opportunities to gain improved confidence. Students enter the swimming galas and a number of them have achieved medals for their skills. One student has achieved numerous medals over the past few years and two students gained medals from their first gala.
4. Students achieve good standards of work skills through participation in practical vocational tasters, such as horticulture, retail, canteen and catering, office and general college maintenance. The college awards its own certificates to celebrate successful progression in all aspects of students' programmes, for example, for swimming, art and crafts, behaviour and communication skills.
5. There are good progression paths for students into local colleges for part of their programme at Homefield College. All students are helped towards an appropriate route on exit from the college; for example, moving into supported housing with day centre provision or enrolling onto local college provision on returning to their home areas.

## Quality of teaching, training and learning



6. Teaching is good overall. Over two-thirds of the lessons observed were good or better. These lessons included provision at Homefield College, a local partner college and at vocational and work placements. Where teaching is good or better, planning is effective, appropriate targets are set and informed by individual learning plans, and session plans are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students. The best sessions are stimulating and varied, enabling students to remain focused and progress well. The teaching and learning of literacy, numeracy and communication aspects of students' programmes are very well embedded within their overall activities.

7. The majority of sessions are well managed and use a variety of teaching methods including one-to-one and small group work to maximise learning. Practical and vocational activities are varied and take place across all the college campus, in the rented village shop and in the horticulture enterprise, sited at one of the off-campus houses. All activities incorporate the teaching and development of personal skills. There is ongoing training for all staff in Makaton signing which is used very effectively to encourage the communication development of students, where appropriate. The recently appointed speech and language therapist is bringing about improvements in embedding appropriate communication across the college. A sign or signs of the week for staff has been introduced. All staff are expected to practice these and they are reinforced at morning handover meetings. Teaching and support staff know students well and set high standards for them. Students are expected to progress in all areas of their individual programmes; that is, vocationally, socially and with their daily living skills. All staff work together well and use appropriate individual behavioural strategies to help students to make good progress.

8. Students attend a local FE college for part of their overall programme in order to further develop their skills. There are currently eight students enrolled on the horticulture, small animal, and information technology (IT) and pottery courses. These students receive appropriate levels of support by Homefield College staff.

9. The college has developed a comprehensive computerised system which is very effectively used to record individual learning plans. Students have a good understanding of their challenging targets and how well they are progressing. Core objectives are set and used consistently across students' programmes. However, literacy, numeracy and communication targets are sometimes too general and are not sufficiently reinforced across all areas of students' programmes.

10. Teaching staff and those supporting students within the residential provision are appropriately qualified or are currently working towards relevant qualifications. One member of staff has a diploma in careers guidance. Many staff have experience of working with people with disabilities. A new IT support officer is shared with other specialist colleges and is partly funded by the LSC. There is ongoing development of the college computer network to include off-campus housing. There are also plans to link the horticulture enterprise site to the network.

11. Very good use is made of both the local community and college resources to provide very good practical learning opportunities for students. For example, students manage, and staff, a successful sweet shop, 'Liquorice', in the local village. Other students are involved in the design and development of a forthcoming Easter display for the shop during the Tuesday evening club. The horticultural enterprise provides students with the opportunity to work in a good quality, realistic setting, maintaining the site and producing plants and vegetables for sale. Links with the local community include using a local swimming club and gym, external work placements with local employers as well as regular shopping and social outings in neighbouring towns.

12. The range of residential accommodation provides students with opportunities to progress towards greater living independence. On the main campus there is a hall of residence with a flat that accommodates three more vulnerable students and a bungalow for students who have achieved



more independent status. Students can then progress to a house in the local community which accommodates four students. Students are encouraged to personalise their own rooms and all residential accommodation is well maintained and equipped. Teaching rooms are satisfactory. Teaching rooms and residential accommodation contain adequate computers for students and staff use during the day, evenings and weekends. Teaching resources are good and are often individually developed to meet each student's needs. A member of staff is responsible for actively researching and developing a range of computer related materials to provide students with the most appropriate resources for all areas of their programmes. For example, laminated cards of symbols and text, relating to food preferences, have been produced for two students with very limited verbal communication, which they use when visiting the local café. The college has no centralised library facility at the present time; however, plans are well underway to develop this facility at one of the residential houses in the local village that is being used as the base for day students. Students are fully involved in the planning of the layout and resources, including deciding on the range of media that will be provided.

13. Individual risk assessments are in place, but the college has not ensured that all external work places have a suitable and appropriate risk assessment prior to students starting their placement.

14. Pre-admission assessments are well co-ordinated with students attending for an initial one day visit. This is followed up with a two day assessment visit. Those students who aim to be residential are accommodated on the campus during the two-day visit. Prospective day students attend daily with no residential assessment. There is no assessment from specialist agencies at the pre-admission stage. It relies on previous reports from external specialists, such as, speech and language, occupational therapy and physiotherapy from students' previous assessments and placements. Whilst these reports are a valuable source of information of students past history, the timescales are sometimes too long to have current relevance. A speech and language therapist is now involved in current pre-admission assessments. Arrangements for assessment of English as a second language or for sensory impairments are not yet in place.

15. Baseline assessments are thorough, and are linked to pre-entry assessments and inform students' ongoing programmes. There are comprehensive paper and computer based initial assessments of literacy and numeracy during the students first term. However, assessment of literacy and numeracy, at the pre-admission stage, is not consistently thorough or necessarily carried out by a qualified and experienced member of staff. Annual reviews are detailed and involve parents, carers, students and other relevant interested bodies such as Connexions personal advisers. Good procedures are in place for all staff to share information in relation to the monitoring of learners' progress. For example, tracking of student progress is well recorded using a customised database and is easily accessible to all staff. Other procedures include focus meetings, daily morning handover meetings and manual record keeping of evening/night shifts.

16. The curriculum meets the needs of students well. When students begin at college they choose a range of practical subjects they would like to study. Building on these taster sessions, there is careful consideration of the range of practically based programmes that they will study in more detail. This selection is made to match best their interests and develop skills and knowledge that will be valuable in their most likely future placement after leaving the college. These individualised programmes include vocational and independent life skills, alongside personal development and leisure activities.

17. There is very good emphasis on improving students' communication skills, as well as other important aspects of literacy and numeracy. These aspects of the curriculum are very successfully embedded in the wide range of their practical activities and further supported by a small number of discrete sessions to consolidate key learning targets. Many parts of students' programmes provide opportunities to work towards nationally recognised awards in vocational subjects and, for a few, in literacy and numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). A few also study for an award based on learning some of the skills required in employment. For a few students there are either too many activities planned within their timetable, including the need to travel between sites, or too lengthy a gap between some of their sessions.

18. An effective link with a local FE college allows students to attend more advanced courses in horticulture and ICT, as well as provide the opportunity to study new subjects, such as animal care

and a range of craft topics, including pottery. This link also enables students to prepare for a possible move to a full-time placement in a general FE college when they leave Homefield College.

19. The daytime curriculum is extended very well by the learning that takes place in residential accommodation, including preparing meals and developing personal hygiene and independent life skills. In addition, there is further enrichment of students' experiences through a broad range of interesting leisure and sporting activities that take place in the evenings and at weekends. For example, a drama and music club meets on one evening each week and the Tuesday Club involves a wide choice of art and craft activities. In addition to such on-site events students visit local leisure and entertainment facilities within the community, including the cinema and the local pub. They also go shopping in the village of Sileby and to larger nearby shopping centres in Loughborough and Leicester. A few students go to a swimming club and train for regional and national galas and competitions. The majority of students attend evening classes at a local adult and community education centre.

20. Opportunities for work experience are good and contribute well to preparing students for their transition after Homefield College. Almost all students take part in work experience for half-day per week throughout their third year; a few also undertake work experience earlier in their programmes. Many of these placements are within the college's own facilities, such as in the sweet shop that is situated in the village, within the horticulture enterprise or college office, the canteen and kitchen or by accompanying the college's maintenance technician. A few students undertake work experience with local employers, including in a pet shop and in a newsagents and stationery store.

21. The curriculum promotes equality of opportunity and diversity very well. Students' programmes are considered individually rather than as part of a group, so that they can more effectively meet their specific needs. Day students are invited to attend the different evening activities. Cultural events and religious festivals are regularly celebrated, including Diwali and Remembrance Day, and are used to provide further interesting opportunities for students to work towards their personal learning objectives.

22. Information provided to prospective students and their parents or carers is good. A detailed and helpful college brochure is supported by a student handbook. This is available in different formats, including as a 'spoken book' with photographs, in order to provide important information in a way that students can understand. Detailed review reports show parents, carers and others very clearly the progress students have made, especially towards achieving their targets.

23. Induction of new students to the college is good. The one and two day pre-admission assessment visits help the students to find out about the college and, when they arrive at the beginning of their first term, sufficient time is spent to ensure they know their way around and to meet the key people they will be working with. While the learning difficulties of a few of the students makes change of placement to the college difficult this sensitive and gradual approach is successful.

24. The quality of personal support is very good. Weekly meetings between students and their personal and support tutors, as well as twice-termly meetings with subject tutors, ensure they regularly review their learning targets, know how well they are doing and what they must do to achieve more. There are also regular joint-tutorial meetings to review core objectives. These formal support sessions are built upon well by the frequent informal support and guidance that is provided by all staff as a matter of course during each day. This support contributes very effectively toward the progress students make in their personal and social development. Staff know their students very well and use this information to help provide well considered advice about behaviour and other issues, such as the development of relationships.

25. When appropriate, staff encourage students to seek further support. There are satisfactory arrangements for such specialist provision, including, for example, anger management, psychiatry, occupational therapy and physiotherapy. Following a lengthy gap there is now good provision for speech and language therapy. However there has been insufficient specialist involvement with regard to the needs of students who have visual impairment or for whom English is a second language. There is very good consideration and planning for students' religious and faith needs. These are discussed with parents and suitable arrangements are made, for example for dietary

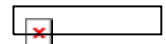
requirements, and for prayer and attending places of worship.

26. Planning for transition from college is effective. A good relationship has been built with the local Connexions service. This involves regular visits to the college for meetings with each student, and for a few students, subsequent visits to the Connexions office. These visits enable students to undertake practice interviews and to carry out further research into possible opportunities after leaving Homefield. These trips also allow students to extend their skills in travelling independently. Review meetings consider next placements and arrangements are planned to involve services from students' home areas as necessary.

27. The college does not satisfactorily fulfil its responsibilities with regard to safeguards for the protection of children and for vulnerable adults. All staff undergo necessary Criminal Records Bureau checks before employment. Appropriate policies have recently been reviewed and senior members of staff have undergone extended training. However, while most other staff have received basic training, approximately a quarter of those who work with students below the age of 19 did not attend the recent training event. A further session is planned for later this term. Staff interviewed during inspection were aware of procedures to be followed if they had concerns about such matters.

28. Attendance and punctuality are very effectively monitored, with information stored on the college's computerised database. This information is used to identify any students who have difficulties and successful strategies are put into place to bring about improvement. These include using 'Connexions cards', a national system whereby excellent attendance leads to small financial rewards, and identifying increased attendance as a core target on the student's individual learning plan. Attendance and punctuality during the week of the inspection were very good.

## Leadership and management



29. The quality of leadership and management is good. The principal has been in post for 18 months and, with other senior staff, has worked successfully to maintain a clear direction for the college that leads to high quality educational provision. The college has continued to develop and strive to improve its practical and relevant approach to each student's learning and, therefore, prepare them more effectively in their progress towards a more independent life.

30. There is good day-to-day management of all areas of the college. This is achieved through successful team work and the very effective communication between all staff. A strong feature of the college is the way in which all staff are valued and feel enabled to contribute to planning, teaching and recording the achievements of students. The range of formal meetings is supplemented effectively by frequent informal discussions about individual students.

31. Quality assurance arrangements are good. Important aspects of students' programmes are routinely monitored, for example, the quality of learning targets, the use of assessment information to inform planning of students' work and to ensure that support requirements are met. Scrutiny of this monitoring also shows it has led to improvements in staff development activities. The college's database contains extensive information about each student's progress. This information is used to review and plan at an individual student level. However, it is not yet used to evaluate different areas of the college or the effectiveness of the college as a whole, and subsequently, therefore, does not contribute to setting targets and planning for further improvement. Quality assurance arrangements are also in place for when students attend courses at a local general further education college.

32. The self-assessment report is based on a review of the previous self-assessment and has involved all staff. Students and their parents and carers have also contributed to it with their views. Detailed and critical judgements are made about the college's strengths and areas for further improvements, with helpful summaries of the evidence upon which the judgements were made. The result is in line with the findings of inspectors. A few weaknesses have been overstated, while the

impact of a few others were not sufficiently considered. The report has already brought about improvements. For example, in the consistency of high quality core learning targets.

33. Overall, there is good induction of new staff, with information and training provided about key aspects of the college's work, including procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults and an understanding of the students' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In order to maintain consistency in managing students' programmes, for example, how to implement behaviour plans and how to use students' core targets in teaching sessions, new staff shadow experienced ones for the first three weeks. Staff feel well supported as they begin at the college and subsequently through their link with a mentor during their first six months.

34. There is satisfactory management of staff performance. Observations of all staff are planned to take place at least twice per year and this has been achieved for almost all. In some instances additional observations have taken place and have been linked to staff development activities. The planned annual appraisal and twice yearly supervision meetings have taken place for most staff. Observations of staff have included some from an external consultant and show rigorous evaluation, identifying good practice as well as providing guidance on areas for improvement. Subsequent observations show improvement in staff development.

35. Staff development arrangements are good. A wide range of training events are routinely planned and cover many topics relevant to meeting the needs of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for example, in managing challenging behaviour and understanding autistic spectrum disorders. Some of this training arises from the monitoring of teaching. However, there is not yet a sufficiently clear link between the self-assessment report and an annual training programme. Staff are able to undertake longer courses enabling them to extend their qualifications, including becoming qualified teachers.

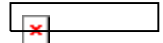
36. The college fulfils the requirements of SENDA and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). All college premises have undergone access surveys. Aspects identified for improvement have been addressed or planned for, including improved signage and adaptations for wheelchair users and those who have mobility difficulties. Discussion of how to meet the needs of students from different faith groups is routinely undertaken, including with parents, and suitable arrangements are made to fulfil these. Cultural and religious festivals are regularly celebrated and used to provide further interesting opportunities for students to work towards their personal learning objectives. The college monitors the ethnicity of staff and has successfully increased representation from minority ethnic groups.

37. Procedures for dealing with complaints are effective, with prompt action taken on the infrequent occasions when they occur. Similarly, there are effective measures to eliminate bullying and harassment. The detailed knowledge that staff have of their students, together with carefully considered behaviour plans and, more generally, close monitoring of students around the college, ensures occurrence of incidents is minimised.

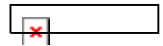
38. Financial planning and management are sound. The college has recently changed from a privately owned company to a not-for-profit one. It plans expenditure with due regard for contingencies, for example, if a student were to leave before anticipated, to ensure it is able to maintain the same high quality of provision for all students. Financial planning is increasingly directed by the college's self-assessment report and subsequent development plan. There is satisfactory regard for ensuring best value is obtained, for example, for the supply of power and telephone services through regular reviews of alternative providers.

39. Students receive a high quality of education at the college. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well towards the targets set within their individual learning plans. Progress is particularly good in communication skills and in personal and social development. The contractual requirements for individual students' provision agreed with the LSC are met. The overall quality of provision is good value for money.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Literacy, numeracy and communication



Overall provision in this area is good (Grade 2).

#### **Strengths**

- very good communication achievement
  
- very good teaching
  
- good resources
  
- very effective embedded curriculum.

#### **Weaknesses**

- some inappropriate target setting
  
- insufficient specialist assessment at pre-admission stage.

#### **Scope of provision**

40. All of the 26 students at Homefield College have literacy, numeracy and communication embedded into their curriculum. Discrete literacy and numeracy lessons are timetabled for students for whom it is considered appropriate. For the remainder there is a focus on the development of communication skills through the use of signs and symbols. There are two full-time and three part-time staff to deliver both discrete and embedded literacy and numeracy. All other staff are involved in supporting the embedded curriculum. The college employs a part-time speech and language therapist and a communication link worker. Students are able to work towards City and Guilds accreditation for literacy and numeracy.

#### **Achievement and standards**

41. There is very good achievement of communication and personal and learning skills. For example a student who on arrival at the college had severe issues about personal hygiene and behaviour is now working in the college sweet shop. He is able to serve members of the public, count out sweets into bags and add up the day's takings on a calculator. Another student who had low-confidence issues and difficulty relating to others is now able to answer the college phone and put callers through to the relevant extension after looking up the number on a wall chart. She was pleased with, and motivated by, her own progress and understands the areas she has to work on to further improve her oral communication skills. Another student who arrived at the college as an elective mute is now able to express her wishes and preferences verbally.

42. Three students in 2003-04 gained externally accredited certificates for both numeracy and literacy. Two students achieved at entry level 1 and one at entry level 3. The college presents its own awards for general achievements which include elements of literacy, numeracy and communication. However, there are no in-house certificates to recognise specific achievements in literacy, numeracy and communication. There is good attendance and punctuality.

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

43. In the majority of lessons teaching is very good. There is effective team working amongst teaching staff and support workers. Teaching is well matched to students' specific needs and integrated into real-life situations. For example, a student on a vocational taster session in the main college office learned how to format standard letters to be sent out to parents. Students are encouraged to reflect on their performance and are motivated by what they achieve in lessons. Staff give clear instructions which are sufficiently repeated to enable students to understand what is required of them. There is good use of individual core objectives on lesson plans which are carried over into all aspects of the student's programme, for example, to maintain eye contact when talking and listening.

44. There is good matter-of-fact behaviour management. Students have both communication and behaviour plans. They are encouraged to take time out if they feel they are becoming overwhelmed by a situation and to indicate to staff by the use of signing or symbols that they need help or conversely that they want to be left alone. Staff make best use of every opportunity to engage and interest students; for example the use of digital photos of familiar places to contextualise learning. Students who have expressed an interest are able to work alongside the college maintenance technician on basic tasks such as putting up signs relating to particular types of fire extinguishers. They are encouraged to work on the development of literacy, numeracy and communication in all of their vocational activities. The discrete literacy, numeracy and communication lessons are equally well contextualised in areas which engage and interest students. Staff encourage students to share their skills, for example one student was helping others to learn Makaton signing as part of her work experience.

45. The whole college environment is well-used as a learning resource; that is, the horticulture enterprise, canteen, kitchen, the office and the college shop. Related literacy, numeracy and communication learning opportunities are embedded into all these activities. The college's sweet shop, for example, is used to familiarise students with communicating with the general public and for further integrated learning. The students cook biscuits and make up bread rolls in the main college canteen which they sell at lunchtime. This provides practice in reading recipes, weighing out ingredients, taking orders and dealing with money.

46. The newly formed team that teaches discrete literacy, numeracy and communication staff are all suitably qualified or experienced. There are some good in-house produced resources for learning, for example laminated symbol sheets, digital photos and video clips.

47. Some of the target setting used in lesson plans is inappropriate. The college has a bank of quality assured targets for each student on the computerised database system. Staff can select relevant targets for their particular area of learning to be included on lesson plans. These subject specific targets frequently contain elements for development which could be carried across the whole curriculum for further reinforcement. For example 'to read and understand the time on an analogue clock to the nearest five minutes.' However at the time of the inspection this was not

happening. Lesson plans contain a section for literacy, numeracy and communication opportunities. However these are frequently very generalised, for example 'speaking and listening' and 'handwriting' and do not provide an indication of how the skills to be learned, will be broken down into small steps of learning, or at what level the learning will take place.

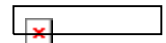
48. There is a very effective practical and relevant curriculum to develop literacy, numeracy and communication. The extended curriculum is also used well to further students' skills. All staff are involved in the promotion of increased literacy, numeracy and communication skills which are fully embedded in the whole college experience.

49. The speech and language therapist and the communication link worker provide very good support for communication, particularly for students who are reluctant or are unable to use speech. There are two informal Makaton training sessions a week for students and staff as well as dedicated sessions to support students. The college is raising the profile of the use of signs and symbols and has introduced a symbol of the week. The tutorial system is used effectively to support and guide students. However, there has been insufficient specialist assessment at the pre-admission stage. Three students have not had timely issues dealt with successfully linked to ESOL. A speech and language therapist was not involved in pre-admission assessment for current students, although all new students are now being assessed.

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

50. The management of this curriculum area is good. The college has recently restructured this department and has appointed a new co-ordinator who has worked hard on developing the curriculum. She assures the quality of all targets on students' individual learning plans. There is a well-managed programme of staff development. Observations of staff teaching are realistic and lead to planned improvements. Staff feel well-supported. The staff induction programme is comprehensive. The college has an inclusive approach towards teaching and learning. The self-assessment report identified most of the strengths found during the inspection. However it was overly critical on a few of the weaknesses.

### **Pre-vocational and social and life skills**



Overall provision in this area is good (Grade 2).

### ***Strengths***

- very good achievement
  
- good teaching
  
- very good personal support
  
- very thorough monitoring and assessment of progress.

### ***Weaknesses***

- inadequate risk assessments for work experience placements
  
- inappropriate individual timetables for a few students.

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

51. The college offers a pre-vocational and life skills curriculum for all students. Independence skills are developed throughout the residential accommodation and through sporting, leisure and everyday activities in the local community. The curriculum includes daily living skills activities such as planning meals, budgeting, shopping, cooking and cleaning carried out in the student's accommodation. Students learn about personal care, presentation and self-advocacy. There are a range of vocational tasters, such as horticulture, maintenance, office work, catering and working in the college sweet shop located in the village. Some students progress on to external work experience with local employers or enrol on programmes in a local FE college. Day students follow the same day and evening curriculum. Students have the opportunity to develop their skills in physical and outdoor pursuits both in the college and the wider community, during the day, evenings and weekends. The college offers in-house certificates of achievement and has introduced externally accredited qualifications at entry level, for example, in information technology and horticulture.

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

52. Students' achievements are very good. They produce very good work in the pre-vocational and the social and life skills curriculum. Through carefully planned activities they are able to achieve outstanding improvement in their self-confidence. This enables them to participate more fully in the college and within the community and provides good preparation for more independence in their future lives.

53. Students' practical work is of a very good standard. There are good quality products from the horticultural enterprise and college canteen. There are attractive and well-produced examples of students' artwork on display. For example, a poster to celebrate the Chinese New Year and a Chinese dragon head for the dance performance by students for the New Year celebrations.

54. The pre-vocational curriculum provides opportunities for students to sample a range of activities and enables some students to progress on to external work experience. There are currently six students in placements with local employers; in shops and within an animal sanctuary. Some 16 students are currently working towards National Proficiency Tests. In 2004, four students achieved entry level 2 awards in Preparing for Employment. Students achieve basic vocational skills and then progress on to land-based courses at the local FE college. There are currently eight students attending horticulture programmes in the local college.

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

55. Teaching is good. All of the lessons observed were judged to be satisfactory or better. In all lessons there is effective promotion of communication and tutors and support staff manage students' behaviour very well. They use strategies that enable students to learn how to manage their own behaviour and to participate fully in their lessons. For example, one student who was afraid of dogs was provided with a series of coping strategies so that when he was out in the community he could better manage his fear.



56. Tutors and support staff consistently use teaching methods very effectively so that students develop skills and increase their proficiency in practical activities. College staff communicate well with students. They provide clear instructions and use Makaton and additional communication methods, such as social stories or symbols, where appropriate to meet the needs of individual students. All staff carefully check students' understanding and allow sufficient time for students to ask, and reply to, questions. Time is set aside to enable students to learn by providing opportunities for reflection and assessment of their work. There are very good relationships between tutors, support staff and students which foster learning. There is a strong emphasis on students expressing themselves and speaking up for themselves in variety of social situations.

57. In most of the lessons observed, teaching is planned and sequenced to engage the interest of students and to enable them to learn effectively. One example was a lesson on developing social skills that involved walking to the bus, travelling to one of the local towns, going to the library and a record shop and then to have a meal in a pub. The majority of students are engaged in long periods of relevant learning activities but a few students have difficulty sustaining concentration when they have little time for consolidation or rest. Conversely for a small number of students there are too lengthy gaps between timetabled sessions.

58. The teaching of practical and pre-vocational skills is combined with the development of personal skills such as making choices, staying on task and working safely. In the majority of lessons observed, students were actively engaged in set tasks, many of which provided challenging but achievable learning experiences. These opportunities are used in context to learn and extend additional skills such as making choices, keeping to time, using money, keeping safe and developing social confidence.

59. Learning is extended using a variety of environments that enables progression from the college environment into the wider community. For example, students learn practical skills such as cookery in the residential areas and then extend these skills by working in the busier environment of the college canteen. In the horticultural enterprise the students are taught in the well-equipped college garden and then progress into the discrete horticulture programmes in a local land-based college. Students on these courses are provided with appropriate levels of support by Homefield College staff, with some moving into other groups without support. The pre-vocational options allow students to sample a variety of practical pre-work placements. Students move into supported work placements within the college where they extend their vocational and social skills in the office, canteen, maintenance, horticultural enterprise and the college sweet shop in the village. There is external work experience in local shops and in an animal sanctuary which is tailored to the students' individual learning needs and preferences. While there are individual risk assessments in place, there are inadequate risk assessments of work placements to highlight any general safeguards required for specific work areas or situations.

60. Individual learning plans are comprehensive and are developed from very thorough and detailed baseline assessments. Targets are set for a wide range of activities and are monitored and revised effectively through tutorials and staff meetings. Progress is regularly assessed and well recorded. Staff record what students have learned and not just what activities they have been engaged in. Tutors revise targets with students in tutorials and many students understand the progress they are making and what they need to learn for their future lives. One student, who was undertaking his first shadowed journey to the local bus stop, was very apprehensive at the start, but when he had achieved his goal, was clearly able to express his pleasure in achieving his target. There are good procedures for capturing the unplanned outcomes of teaching and learning that occur. For example one student who was taking orders from college staff for lunch time snacks, spontaneously asked visitors to the college whether they wished to purchase sandwiches from the college canteen. This achievement was acknowledged and recorded in her file.

61. The majority of staff are well qualified and/or experienced and are encouraged, to undertake further professional training. There is good access to appropriate resources in the college. Students use domestic and college facilities to learn everyday skills and to undertake vocational sampling. Good use is made of the community to increase social confidence. Use of buses, shops, libraries and leisure facilities such as the public swimming pool and pubs enable students to develop and practice and extend their skills in new social situations. Staff have high expectations of students and

expect them to succeed in all their activities. There are good and cooperative relationships between students and staff that contribute to students increasing independence.

62. Staff have a good understanding of what students need to learn and of each student's learning style. Staff work effectively as one team to support students in all areas of their programme. Tutors and support staff are very skilled in effectively using strategies to manage inappropriate and challenging behaviour and to maximise learning.

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

63. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum is comprehensive, well- developed and enables students to learn real life skills and increase their self-confidence. All the college staff work effectively in teams supporting students throughout the extended curriculum. There is good communication between staff about students' progress and this is enhanced through the use of a comprehensive computerised data system. The individual needs of students are met effectively. There is good monitoring of the quality of the students' experience. Staff are committed to continuing professional development. The self-assessment process involves all staff and the report is satisfactory. The impact of some strengths was underestimated and some weaknesses on the teaching and learning were overestimated. There is good promotion of equality and diversity issues across the college.