



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

# **Inspection report**

## **Oakwood Court College**

Dates of inspection: 9-13 May 2005

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Reference:

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## Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Oakwood Court College
Type of college:	Independent residential specialist college
Principal:	Ms Jeana Butler
Address of college:	7/9 Oak Park Villas Dawlish Devon EX7 0DE
Telephone number:	01626 864066
Fax number:	01626 866770
Chair of governors:	N/A
Reference number*:	3586426
Name of reporting inspector:	Kathleen Smith HMI
Dates of inspection:	9-13 May 2005

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

## **Part A: Summary**

### **Information about the college**

Oakwood Court College is an independent residential specialist college, which is part of Education and Care (Devon) Ltd, a company founded by the former principal, who is now the Chief Executive. The college was opened in 1998 at its present site, and is based in the seaside town of Dawlish in Devon. In 2000, a further residence, Fairfield House, was opened and the college now operates on the two sites, situated approximately two miles apart. The company also provides residential and supported living care services within the locality. This includes The Lindens, a three-bedded residential unit within walking distance of the main site, and Fairfield Cottage situated within the grounds of Fairfield House which provides accommodation for three continuing students funded by Social Services.

The college aims to meet the needs of young people, aged 16 to 25, with moderate and severe learning difficulties who may also have associated complex needs. These include challenging behaviours, autistic spectrum disorders and speech and language difficulties. Currently there are 28 residential and two day students partly or solely funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Of these, 20 are aged between 16 and 18, and ten aged 19 years and older. There are 12 female and 18 male students in total. Of the two day students, one does not access any direct college provision. The college is contracted with the local LSC, to provide and monitor an individual learning plan for this student with college staff support, and to access other local trainer and day provider activities. There are no LSC funded students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Although students come to the college from a wide geographical area, most are from the South West. Some students who are able to secure joint funding with Social Services, are placed at the college for up to 52 weeks a year.

The college provides individual student programmes and utilises residences, leisure, pre-vocational, vocational, community and work based learning environments. Literacy, numeracy, information technology (IT) and communication skills are taught within discrete lessons and across all curriculum areas. There are links with a local general further education college (GFE), which involves students from both colleges working as a group on joint projects. In addition four students access the GFE college's own courses. All students participate in extended curriculum activities which include various social and sporting clubs, and evening classes at local community colleges. The college's aim is to 'provide quality assured programmes, including pre-vocational courses, self-care and life skills training, to disabled students who are presently unable to access alternative settings because of their degree of impairment'.

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

The quality of teaching and the standards of students' achievements are good in independent living skills and pre-vocational studies. The college provides good teaching with many opportunities in these areas for students to learn, develop communication and improve their

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confidence and personal skills. However, there are limited opportunities for a small number of students to access vocational programmes through GFE colleges. Provision for literacy, numeracy and communication is unsatisfactory. Students benefit from the effective support received during lessons and for personal issues, but there is insufficient specialist support and expertise to meet the needs of students with specific or complex needs.

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

***Key strengths***

- good development of communication skills
- very good standards achieved by students in independence skills and personal development
- effective development of work related skills
- good teaching and learning
- extensive and well- managed work experience programme
- good use of the community and extended curriculum to promote learning
- effective pre-entry and initial assessment processes
- good personal support.

***What should be improved***

- literacy and numeracy provision
- tracking and monitoring of progress
- staff expertise in specific learning difficulties and disabilities
- limited opportunity for progression onto vocational programmes
- underdeveloped planning and monitoring systems.

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
Pre-vocational Studies	<b>Good:</b> The development of practical and work related skills is effective. Creative and flexible teaching supports the development of new skills and knowledge. External work experience arrangements are of good standard. Insufficient progression opportunities on to vocational programmes for a minority of students. Recording of students' progress is ineffective.
Literacy, Numeracy and Communications	<b>Unsatisfactory:</b> Students' achievements in literacy and numeracy are unsatisfactory. Planning for teaching and learning is inadequate and target setting is poor. There is insufficient specialist support and the integration of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is underdeveloped. However there are good standards of communication skills development through the use of practical and every day activities..
Independent Living Skills	<b>Good:</b> Students' achievements are good. The development of their confidence and independence skills is very good. Teaching and learning are good. There is a wide range of extended curriculum activities, and participation rates are high. Inappropriate accommodation limits learning in some lessons. Monitoring and review of students' overall progress are insufficient.

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

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a shared ethos in the college which is well focused on the needs of students. Staff work together effectively as a team and are well supported in undertaking their roles. Significant improvements have been made to the curriculum and to the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. The management and co-ordination of literacy and numeracy provision are inadequate. Planning, quality assurance and monitoring are underdeveloped. The college's response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) (SENDA) is satisfactory and appropriate actions and training are in place with respect to legislation on safeguarding children. The college has a policy with regard to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) and staff have received basic awareness training. However monitoring of issues relating to equal opportunities is underdeveloped. Financial management is satisfactory. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

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

The college response to social inclusion is satisfactory. The college recruits students with a range of moderate to severe learning difficulties. There has been an increase in the number of students with speech and language difficulties and hearing impairments. Staff have been trained to meet the changing needs of the student population. There is a good gender balance of both students and staff. Very few students or staff come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college makes good use of the local community to enable students to develop and practise personal and social skills. It is effective in promoting students' confidence to advocate for themselves. Education inclusion is satisfactory. There is a good programme for work placements but for a minority of students there is limited progression onto vocational programmes. There is good promotion of cultural diversity in some lessons and staff work with students to help them understand issues of stereotyping and discrimination. Literacy and numeracy provision is unsatisfactory. The college does not provide key skills provision as this is inappropriate in meeting the needs of the present student cohort.

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

Support and guidance for students are satisfactory overall. Personal support for students is good. Personal tutors and keyworkers work closely together in providing effective and immediate support to students. Support staff are deployed effectively and provide good support to students within lessons. Students have good access to a trained counsellor for personal issues. They are supported effectively through induction which is well organised. Care plans are thorough and risk assessments are satisfactory. The monitoring and review of behaviour plans are unsatisfactory. Access to specialist expertise in dyslexia support and speech and language therapy is insufficient. Transition planning is satisfactory. Legal requirements regarding child protection are met and safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and implemented.

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**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**

- they help you to learn
- it's friendly and everybody looks after each other
- the cooking
- travelling on my own now
- communicating with people outside
- doing lots of evening classes
- mixing with lots of different people
- dancing
- being out in the community more
- the teachers
- it's the 'best in the west'.

**What they feel could be improved**

- more students and bigger college
- internet access
- a wider range of things on the timetable
- overlong lessons
- more literacy and numeracy
- more privacy in Living your Life classroom
- more places to visit at the weekend.

**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 local LSC should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

## **Part B: The college as a whole**

### **Achievement and standards**

1. Students are taught in mixed age groups, and there is no significant difference in achievements between students aged 16 to 18 and those aged over 19. Retention rates have improved significantly since the last inspection and are in line with other specialist colleges. Attendance rates and punctuality during the week of inspection were good.
2. Communication, independence and social skills are being developed effectively across curriculum activities. Students are encouraged to interact with others appropriately and significant attention is given to students' listening skills and taking turns in discussions. They make good progress in relation to their initial assessment and demonstrate high standards of social skills and confidence. Students are encouraged to develop assertiveness and to advocate for themselves. They learn to travel independently, to access community facilities and develop personal and domestic skills in preparation for adult life. Personal development is enhanced by their participation in extended and enrichment curriculum activities.
3. Students develop high standards of work-related skills through practical activities and work experience opportunities which are available to all students. Students are set challenging targets and expectations are high of both staff and students. The young people learn to make decisions, to work effectively as a team and to relate to others appropriately within a realistic work setting. Students learn to follow good work practices in the use of equipment and in the care of animals. However for a small number of students, there are insufficient opportunities to achieve their potential through participation in courses leading to qualifications in vocational areas.
4. Communication skills are being developed effectively across curriculum activities but there are missed opportunities for students to develop literacy and numeracy skills. It is not possible to accurately identify students' achievements over a period of time in literacy and numeracy as baseline assessments have only been introduced recently and tracking of students' progress is ineffective.
5. Students' destinations are satisfactory overall and are in line with long term objectives identified within individual learning plans. Most students move on to supported living and mixed packages of provision which include day care and part-time GFE college courses. However, only a very small number of students progress into open employment or to full-time GFE college vocational courses.

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

6. Teaching and learning are good in independent living skills and pre-vocational studies and satisfactory in literacy, numeracy and communication when practised during
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practical activities. Activities are well organised and planned effectively to develop independence skills. Detailed care plans prioritise objectives for the students to achieve in personal and independence skills within residences. These are monitored effectively to ensure students build on the skills they have already learned. Curriculum activities engage the students in learning, develop and reinforce skills and deal sensitively and appropriately with issues which are age appropriate and relevant to their lives. For example, in one lesson assertiveness techniques were being practised to enable students to deal with complaints effectively. Literacy and numeracy is more effectively developed within independence training where practical activities are involved, for example, where the measuring and weighing of ingredients are required to cook a meal; where students are involved in planning a train journey; and in budgeting their own money to pay for evening activities.

7. In the less effective lessons literacy and numeracy are insufficiently integrated into activities. They are insufficiently planned to match individual student's needs, and are too long for those students with short attention spans. For example, in one lesson students with low levels of ability in literacy were copying details from a whiteboard. In the same lesson lasting for three hours, students were not motivated to join in the lesson and began arguing with one another.

8. Within pre-vocational studies activities are planned well and provide valuable opportunities for students to learn through every day contexts. Work preparation reinforces the development of work-related skills by giving the students opportunities to reflect on their own experiences within the workplace. Students learn the skills required to obtain and maintain their work placement, such as how to present appropriately for interviews, and how to relate to fellow workers and managers.

9. Resources are satisfactory overall. Staff develop teaching materials and resources which are matched effectively to individual needs. Information and communication technology equipment and resources have improved significantly but some seating and maintenance of equipment are unsatisfactory. Sufficient equipment and tools are available for enrichment and pre-vocational and for pre-vocational curriculum activities. Residential accommodation provides suitable provision for students. Kitchen areas and domestic arrangements are satisfactory and provide appropriate learning environments for students to practise independence skills. Some teaching accommodation is inadequate and has a negative impact on students' behaviours during lessons and their ability to complete tasks in safety.

10. Staff qualifications and experience are satisfactory. Staff know the students well and are aware of the approaches and strategies to apply to promote learning effectively. Most tutors have teaching or training qualifications, and support and residential staff have relevant qualifications to perform their jobs. Staff have had insufficient training and staff development in literacy and numeracy. Most have undergone training in autistic spectrum disorders, but few staff have had up-to-date training in behaviour management. There are insufficient staff with specialist qualifications or expertise in relation to specific communication problems or learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

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11. Pre-entry and initial assessment processes are comprehensive and provide a sound basis for the students' individual learning programme. The initial application form requires previous placement providers, agencies, professionals and parents to provide information about the student's prior learning and achievements, their level of independence, and personal and social skills. Pre-entry assessment involves a three day assessment prior to entry. The student's ability to travel independently is carefully assessed. Using this assessment information the initial programme is arranged with involvement of the student. Support levels are identified and the specialist equipment or services needed to ensure individual needs are met. Students' long term goals are identified and contained within the initial assessment report. On entry, students follow an extended assessment period of six to eight weeks after which the individual learning plan is devised. Care plans are also devised which prioritise and highlight appropriate objectives for students in independence and personal skills. Residential staff are aware of the learning targets contained within individual learning plans and record students' progress against these targets observed within residences. This information is collated and used to inform end of term reviews.

12. Initial assessment in literacy and numeracy is less effective. Ongoing assessment and monitoring of students' progress is unsatisfactory. There is inadequate review of individual targets contained within individual learning plans. Although achievements are collated at the end of each term the information gathered does not accurately reflect students' progress. Achievements are not consistently recognised by all teaching staff. Learning targets are not revised and updated sufficiently, and in some cases do not build on objectives already achieved.

13. The extent to which programmes meet the needs and interests of students is satisfactory. The college has undertaken significant curriculum development since the last inspection. There are now good opportunities for students to develop their social and personal skills. The extended curriculum includes a wide range of activities, which are helping students to develop their skills in a range of contexts.

14. There is an extensive and effective work experience programme. All students benefit from the opportunity to undertake work experience. There is an appropriate range of placements available, including major retail stores, schools and garden centres. The programme is effectively co-ordinated to ensure students gain good experience in work-related activities.

15. For a small number of students the range of vocational options available through links with GFE colleges is limited. The achievements made in pre-vocational studies are not well recorded. The integration of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum is not well managed and there has been inadequate training for staff in this area.

16. Personal support for students is good. Personal tutors meet with their students every day. Communication between staff about students is effective and the personal tutor and key worker work well together in offering support to students. There is good access to a trained counsellor and this service is well used by students. Support staff work well with students to help them make progress in their learning programmes.

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17. The information sent to students and parents before entry to the college is welcoming and informative. It includes stories compiled by previous students on how they settled into college and what to expect; these provide a friendly guide for prospective students and their families. Induction is well organised. New students arrive two days before the others arrive. Prior to this, personal tutors/key workers brief the whole staff team on the needs of individuals. The majority of students settle in to college quickly and there are good relationships between staff and students.

18. Care plans are thorough. Students are encouraged to take appropriate levels of responsibility and are developing good self-advocacy skills. Communication with parents is good. They are kept up to date with any changes to the student's programme and are contacted promptly about any problems or concerns.

19. Personal support for students is good. A range of specialist support is provided to students, including medical and psychological services. However, there are gaps in the provision of specialist support. Students do not have access to specialist staff trained in dyslexia support and they have insufficient access to speech therapy. Behaviour management plans are in place but are not well reviewed and updated. Although staff deal with behavioural issues satisfactorily overall, staff expertise in dealing with severe challenging behaviour is insufficient.

20. Transition planning for students leaving the college is satisfactory but limited by the options available to students on leaving. The college has good communication links with relevant agencies such as Connexions and Social Services. They are invited to attend transition meetings to discuss progression. Legal requirements regarding child protection are met and safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and implemented

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

21. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college is developing its management structure in response to a growth in the number of students. The senior management team comprises the chief executive, the principal, the head of residential services and the recently appointed business manager. The chief executive has started to delegate more responsibility, for example human resource and finance management, to other members of the team. Policies and procedures are in place for all key functions. There is a system for annual review of policies and procedures but the college has not met all its target dates for review. The chief executive recognises the need to develop more formal systems of monitoring and review.

22. There is a shared ethos in the college, which is well-focused on the needs of students. Staff roles and responsibilities are clear and there is effective team working. For example, residential and teaching staff work well together to ensure cohesion in students' learning plans and learning support assistants work effectively with teachers in lessons. Communication is good and staff are well supported in undertaking their roles. The college has made significant improvements since the last inspection in curriculum development and the quality of teaching and learning. The proportion of lessons observed that were

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satisfactory or good is significantly higher than at the last inspection and is above overall grades for similar colleges.

23. Planning and monitoring are underdeveloped. The college has undertaken a self-assessment process and a development plan is in place for 2004-05, which identifies issues for action and a timescale for improvement. The views of students, parents and external organisations are collected and are very positive. The college has made progress on some of the weaknesses it identified in the 2003-4 self-assessment report, for example the organisation of work placements which is now a strength. However, there are still weaknesses in the strategy for literacy and numeracy. Self-assessment is not sufficiently rigorous for some aspects of the work, for example the college did not identify weakness in the system for reviewing students' progress. Monitoring is undertaken of the levels of support given to students but it is not sufficiently detailed. The system for collecting information on students' achievement is complex and does not give a clear enough picture of overall progress. Analysis of quantitative data to inform future planning is underdeveloped, for example on students' achievements and their destinations after leaving college.

24. Although staff training and development is satisfactory overall it is insufficiently planned and organised to meet the changing needs of the college. Teaching staff have sufficient qualifications. Staff access training on a range of matters relating to the student experience, including working with autistic students and aspects of personal education. However, there is no formal staff development plan. Training needs are identified during the induction of new staff and via supervision sessions. There are gaps in training, for example there has been a lack of staff development to help the college develop literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. There has been some training on behaviour management but there is no systematic training to ensure regular updating on specific aspects of behaviour management, such as restraint. Residential staff undertake training and qualifications appropriate to their responsibilities.

25. The college meets most of its legislative requirements with respect to equality and diversity. The college response to SENDA legislation has been satisfactory. The college understands its responsibilities. An appropriate audit has been undertaken and planned work is on target to be completed by September 2005. The college is only partially compliant in relation to equal opportunities legislation in accordance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). Staff have received basic awareness training and more is planned for the summer term; there is also an intention to include this work in the next development plan. However, no formal monitoring takes place with regard to equal opportunities. There are good examples of promotion of cultural diversity in some areas of the curriculum and staff work effectively with students on stereotyping and discrimination.

26. The college provides a safe environment for students. Procedures for risk assessments are satisfactory. Good attention is paid to health and safety within the work-related curriculum, both in college and in the workplace, and students are developing a good awareness of health and safety issues.

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27. The day-to-day running of the college is satisfactory. Work based programmes are well organised and independent living skills curriculum activities are effectively managed. However, there is insufficient liaison between departments providing the pre-vocational curriculum and a limited range of vocational courses and qualifications available to students where appropriate. The college has good links with many external partners, including Connexions, Social Services, employers and the local community. Links with local GFE colleges are less well developed. Students attend evening classes but only a very small number attend vocational provision during the day.

28. The college manages its finances satisfactorily. Resources are generally well deployed to meet the needs of students. Staff qualifications and experience generally match the work they are undertaking with students. Learning resources and residential facilities are satisfactory. There are some shortcomings in the use of accommodation and the provision of specialist support. The college overall adheres to the specifications contained within individual learner schedules, agreed with the referring local LSCs. The college gives satisfactory value for money.

## **Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas**

### **Pre-vocational Studies**

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

- good development of work-related skills
- good teaching
- extensive and well-managed work experience programme
- good use of realistic learning environments.

### *Weaknesses*

- limited opportunities for progression to vocational programmes
- insufficient recording of achievement.

### *Scope of provision*

29. The pre-vocational curriculum consists of three areas: pre-vocational training, work preparation and work experience. All of the 29 students access the college's pre-vocational training areas which consist of animal care, catering, horticulture, maintenance, retail and workshop. Additionally, 18 of these students also take part in separate work preparation and work experience programmes. Placements range from sheltered to open employment situations within the local community. A college partnership programme with a local GFE college enables four students to follow level 1 courses in catering and retail. A further ten students work towards an OCR entry level award in community horticulture. Students undertaking animal care and work preparation can access internal accreditation at entry level and level 1. All other pre-vocational programmes provide opportunities to work towards internally identified learning objectives.

### *Achievement and standards*

30. Students develop good work related skills on pre-vocational programmes. Within practical activities students learn DIY skills through entrepreneurial initiatives. Students demonstrate high standards whilst participating in work experience. They are motivated, conscientious and relate to others appropriately. These skills are reinforced during work preparation lessons where students learn to express their opinions appropriately, to make decisions and work effectively as a team. Students also develop very good safe work practices which they adopt in different learning environments, and in different situations.

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They know how to use tools and equipment safely, wear appropriate safety clothing and how to handle animals. Students gain in confidence by facing new situations and challenges, and in succeeding in the given tasks.

31. All students achieve subject specific goals which are internally accredited in pre-vocational programmes. Four students are making good progress in achieving vocational qualifications through the local GFE college. Three students are near to completing a level 1 qualification in catering and one student is due to complete an OCR qualification. However, there are insufficient opportunities for students, where appropriate, to achieve nationally recognised vocational qualifications. However, the inadequate tracking of overall students' progress makes it difficult to ascertain if students' achievements are accurate for internally accredited courses.

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

32. Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons a good range of teaching approaches are well used in realistic contexts. Teachers encourage active learning and participation in a range of practical and meaningful activities. There is a strong emphasis on health and safety throughout the curriculum which supports the development of safe and organised working practices. All practical session plans include health and safety considerations and all activities have risk assessments. Within an animal care lesson, the tutor continually demonstrated and reinforced the correct procedures for handling animals safely. Two students working together to hold a rabbit adopted roles of handler and prompter, demonstrating both secure knowledge of specialised techniques and effective teamwork. During a horticulture lesson a student quickly adopted the correct posture and movement for digging and handling garden forks.

33. Staff demonstrate good levels of knowledge and expertise which support learning within lessons. Support staff are deployed effectively. As a team, tutors and support staff maximise the opportunities for students to develop work-related skills. For example, in animal care the staff have established procedures to support individual students with specific animals, which include a particular way of greeting rabbits to calm them, a traffic light system that informs students of the levels of danger involved in handling, and mobile cages to facilitate greater access. In horticulture, students worked individually on different aspects of the same task: one student prepared the borders, another planted, a further student prepared ground for putting in vegetables, whilst a partner marked out different areas with string for the various crops. Students knew their roles and had specific practical targets to achieve which contributed to the overall team effort.

34. The development of work-related skills is planned effectively through work preparation lessons. For example, four students worked collaboratively to plan a visit to a local fast-food restaurant. At the same time the students researched the company's website, discussed the different job roles within the workplace and related them to their own experiences of work. All students were involved in making decisions, deciding the order in which tasks should be undertaken. They also researched and debated the merits of three different local towns to visit and reached agreement on the methods of travel and the amount

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of money needed. They demonstrated the clear acquisition of new skills and confidence in expressing opinions and ideas. Learning about employment was enjoyable, challenging and accessible.

35. The majority of learning environments are well-resourced. The students following the catering course use industry standard college kitchen facilities. The animal care department is compact but provides a wide variety of small animals and a realistic working environment for students to learn. The college has recently acquired the 'Dawlish Workshop', which students have helped to refurbish from a disused village shop into a well-resourced and organised multi-materials workshop.

36. Initial assessment within pre-vocational skills is satisfactory and provides a useful starting point to base the students' learning programme. However, the implementation of the recent introduction of a college database to support the process of recording achievement is complicated. Not all staff have opportunity or the expertise in usage, or time to update records or review progress. Consequently student achievement is not consistently captured across all lessons. Not all learning, especially incidental learning, is recorded or shared. This results in a minority of students being insufficiently challenged and disengaged.

37. The work experience programme offered to students is extensive. All students undertake internal work experience within the college and 20 students have external work experience placements covering a wide range of occupational areas. Students benefit from the challenge and stimulus provided from real working environments. For example, one student on work placement in a local supermarket was extremely keen to make sure he did a good job. He was able to explain how important it was to keep shelves well stocked and looking enticing for customers. He had earned the respect of his fellow workers and the shop manager through his ability to complete tasks carefully and with a sense of pride. The college had been exemplary in organising and supporting the placement. A member of college staff had supported the student to travel by public transport to and from the store, and information provided pre-placement by the college was informative and helpful. Monitoring of the placement was ongoing and staff at the store felt confident in both directing and supporting the student.

38. Opportunities for students, where appropriate, to follow vocational qualifications and courses are unsatisfactory. For example, one student taking horticulture at the college expressed his preference to undertake a qualification related to the motor trade. Present arrangements with local GFE colleges or training providers do not include a sufficient range of vocational options or courses for students to follow.

39. Students receive effective personal and learning support in pre-vocational lessons from staff who work across the curriculum and form supportive relationships with their students. This process is enhanced by the vocational teachers, who are also personal tutors responsible for specific learners. Support staff provide a quick and effective response to any concerns or problems during lessons.

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***Leadership and management***

40. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Day-to-day co-ordination and implementation of the curriculum area is effective. Pre-vocational tutors contribute to the college review process and work effectively as a team to ensure students' needs are met. A team of four tutors are responsible for different aspects of the curriculum and manage their own subject areas effectively. However strategic planning for pre-vocational programmes is underdeveloped and the overall management of the vocational curriculum lacks clarity. Co-ordination is complex, formal meetings occur once every eight weeks and opportunities for formal communication are limited. The self-assessment report identifies many of the strengths and weaknesses outlined in the report.

## **Literacy, numeracy and communications**

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

### ***Strengths***

- good development of communication skills
- good use of practical activities to develop literacy, numeracy and communication.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor planning for teaching and learning
- poor use of target setting
- insufficient specialist support
- inadequate integration of literacy and numeracy into curriculum activities.

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

41. Literacy, numeracy, communication and Information Technology (IT) are provided for all students as an integrated part of their curriculum. In addition, one discrete literacy and numeracy lesson a week is timetabled for those students who are assessed as being at entry level or above. The majority of students have discrete IT lessons and 14 students have discrete total communication lessons on their timetable. Most students are working towards OCR entry level qualifications in IT.

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

42. Students achieve good standards in communication skills. They run their own daily student meeting and demonstrate a high level of ability in taking turns, requesting and sharing of information. Students work well and co-operatively at this meeting which is chaired effectively by a student who on entry to the college was unable to participate effectively in a group. Students who had previously found it difficult to communicate are now able to go to the college office and make requests of the office staff, such as laminating and photocopying. Their improved communication skills result in increased independence in their everyday lives. For example, a student is now able to ask for a ticket when using public transport and can do this effectively. She had not been aware of the need to pay money on a bus journey when she first joined the college.

43. At the time of the inspection there was no accredited achievement of literacy and numeracy and the system to reach distance travelled from the baseline assessment was not

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fully in place. The college has only recently introduced a new OCR accredited qualification for IT and to date students have obtained a 100% pass rate of modules towards a full award.

### ***Teaching and learning***

44. There is a good use of meaningful activities to develop literacy, numeracy and communication. For example, in the better lessons students were able to measure wood in their workshop lesson to make up different items. At the end of the lesson, after discussion with the tutor, they wrote up a list of the particular tools they had used. This also gave them an opportunity to develop their memory skills. In another class after looking up the times on the internet, students were able to work out which would be the most appropriate train to catch in order to attend a meeting. In catering lessons students weigh out the correct ingredients. In other lessons within the residences, there is a strong focus on improving independent living skills through the use of decision-making and budgeting. Much attention is given to improving speaking and listening skills and students are encouraged to discuss and make choices around their daily activities.

45. The planning of teaching and learning is poor. Not all staff are sufficiently aware of the need to plan for and record students' progress in literacy, numeracy and communication. They see this aspect as additional, rather than a fully integral, part of the lesson. It is not possible to establish the extent to which students are building on the skills they have learned and whether they are sufficiently challenged to realise their potential. The college lessons are too long to hold students' interest. The discrete lessons are timetabled for three hours. Many of the students have a short attention span and behavioural problems, and the length of the lessons fails to engage them fully. There is insufficient pace and variety within some lessons and teaching methods are inappropriate for pre-entry learners. Although staff have a detailed knowledge of their students they do not always use this to plan activities designed to meet their individual needs.

46. There is a poor use of target setting. Some subject tutors have targets for literacy, numeracy and communication on their lesson plans. However, in some cases they are too generalised and do not relate to the specific skills being developed within the lesson. Staff choose targets from a list compiled for each student. This list does not always contain targets which are relevant to the skills being developed during a particular lesson. The wording of targets is over-complicated and not user-friendly.

47. Resources are satisfactory overall. The majority of teaching staff have had training in the adult pre-entry core curriculum but further training is required. Staff lack awareness of how to integrate literacy and numeracy effectively into lessons. Teaching materials are being developed by staff incorporating digital photographs to engage and motivate students. There are insufficient computers in the total communication room and those that are in use are not well maintained. The chairs in this room are unsuitable for use with a computer.

48. Initial assessment is satisfactory with sufficient information to establish students' ability levels in literacy, numeracy and communications. However, the mechanisms for tracking progression towards learning targets are underdeveloped. There is an inconsistency

around target setting across the curriculum. Students' progress towards targets is not always evaluated at reviews. Many staff are working hard to develop their students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills but this work is not always fully planned, recorded and monitored. This results in lost opportunities for a whole college approach to develop these skills further. Staff contribute to witness statements to identify progression towards targets matched to the core curricula. However they do not all have sufficient awareness of the requirements for achievement at each milestone or level to know if the relevant skills have been reached. The internal moderation of this process is not yet in place.

49. Literacy and numeracy programmes are not sufficiently matched to students' needs. There is insufficient co-ordination and inadequate integration of literacy and numeracy into curriculum activities. Where appropriate students are not given the opportunities to gain appropriate qualifications in literacy, numeracy or communication.

50. Specialist support for speech and language therapy and dyslexia is insufficient. A speech and language therapist visits the college once a month for three hours to carry out assessments. However this is not sufficient and results in a backlog of students waiting to be assessed. No one is available to assess students for dyslexia although the college has plans to address this in the new academic year.

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

51. Leadership and management of literacy, numeracy and communications are unsatisfactory. There is no overall strategy to provide direction to members of staff who in some cases do not see it as their role or responsibility to further students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills development during lessons. These skills are viewed as an additional, rather than integral, part of the lesson in some subject areas. The college's aims with regard to total communication are not shared or implemented effectively by all staff. It is viewed as a separate subject and insufficient recognition is given to the ways in which other areas of the curriculum contribute to the total communication method of learning. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. The self-assessment report mentioned many of the weaknesses contained within this report but over-estimated the strengths.

## **Independent Living Skills**

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

### ***Strengths***

- very good development of students' confidence and independence
- good teaching
- good range of and participation in extended curriculum activities.

### ***Weaknesses***

- inappropriate teaching accommodation
- insufficient monitoring and review of students' overall progress.

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

52. Currently there are 29 LSC-funded students undertaking independent living skills. Students have timetabled lessons in a range of subjects that contribute to the development of independent living skills for their future lives. These include creative arts, living your life, healthy living, and the Duke of Edinburgh award. Students undertake structured training relating to independent living in the residential accommodation. The extended curriculum offers activities in the local community in the evenings and at the weekend. All students undertake the Duke of Edinburgh award. Evening classes are attended by 21 students in such subjects as drama, cookery and keep fit at a local community college.

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

53. Students' achievements are good. Development of students' confidence and independence is very good. They demonstrate these skills across curriculum activities, during their daily student meeting and in everyday interaction with others. Students run the daily student meeting effectively. They participate confidently and appropriately in discussions and take responsibility for organising activities or for passing on messages from staff. Students' independence is developed well both in lessons and in activities within the residential accommodation. Students learn to travel independently if appropriate, to manage their own finance and to manage their own medication. They achieve learning objectives in personal and independence skills identified within individual learning plans and contained within lesson plans across all curriculum activities. These include such things as being able to follow instructions, behave appropriately in social situations and communicate effectively with their peers.

54. Students attain high standards within the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme with 18 having achieved bronze awards and 13 silver awards over the last two years. Three students have progressed through the scheme and are now working towards the gold award. Students

gain recognition for their achievements in the extended curriculum, and obtain special achievement awards from activities organised by the local swimming club, air and army cadets, sailing clubs and tae kwon do classes. Students who attend evening college courses also gain internal certificates for their achievements and good attendance.

### **The quality of teaching, training and learning**

55. Teaching, training and learning are good. Teaching is well planned, and is based on knowledge of individual students' needs and abilities. In one lesson, the teacher had written separate lesson plans for two individual students who sometimes present difficult behaviour when together. There is a clear focus on developing confidence through a variety of subjects, such as drama, creative arts, healthy living and living your life. Students are encouraged to take responsibility during lessons according to their abilities. In one lesson, a student was given responsibility for video recording role-play exercises. In other lessons, students took responsibility for checking registers or reading out group goals.

56. The best teaching ensured that all students were involved throughout, taking part in interesting and relevant activities that motivate them well. In one lesson, students used discussion and role-play to develop their understanding of aggressive, passive and assertive behaviours. They learned the characteristics of these behaviours and their impact on others. They were able to practise assertive behaviour in situations that were relevant to them, such as returning faulty goods or simply asking someone if they could 'get passed them'. They were able to identify other situations in which they would need to be assertive. Diversity and equality are promoted effectively. In one lesson, learning materials reflected different abilities and ethnicity. In another, whilst developing their practical skills students learned about North America and the culture of native Americans. In a small number of lessons, activities were too long and not broken down sufficiently to maximise learning. In one lesson, three role-plays were undertaken before being followed by a review and discussion. Students could not remember clearly enough the first and second role-play to participate fully in discussion.

57. Inappropriate teaching accommodation limits learning; most rooms are too small for the number of staff and students involved in activities. This limits the teaching and learning strategies that can be used and exacerbates the impact of individual behavioural difficulties on other students during lessons. The creative arts room is large and bright, but the craft area within this room is too cramped and has a low sloping ceiling that presents health and safety problems. In one lesson, students undertook practical activities on the floor because there was not enough space in the craft area, making cutting even more difficult for those with poor manipulative skills. There are good quality learning materials in most lessons and craft materials are good. Suitable resources are also available for practical activities in residential accommodation.

58. Initial assessment is detailed and individual assessments are used effectively in planning most lessons. Students are fully involved in evaluating their own progress and achievements in lessons. Planning and monitoring activities based on individual care plans in residential accommodation are effective and clearly documented. Although students are

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involved in termly reviews to evaluate their overall progress, this is not sufficient to enable students to participate fully in assessing their own progress towards their medium and long term goals. Information collated does not always capture accurately overall students' achievement.

59. Programmes and courses meet the needs of individual students well. The range of extended curriculum activities is good and participation rates are high. Good use is made of community activities to develop students' skills, confidence and independence. These include a local slimming club, tae kwon do club and air and army cadets. All students participate in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, which effectively enables them to learn new skills and develop their confidence. Most students attend evening classes of their own choice at a local community college in addition to their classes during the day. Residential facilities and activities are used well to promote independence through activities related to individual care plans, such as laundry, cookery, budgeting, use of leisure time and personal care. Students achieve external certificates for many of the activities within the extended curriculum. The college runs an appropriate transition programme for those students who are in their final year to help prepare them for life after college.

60. Guidance and support are good. Students benefit from high levels of support in lessons. Support is effective and challenges students to achieve their potential. Staff support students and prompt them appropriately without doing things for them. Daily group tutorials and staff meetings enable tutors to keep informed about issues affecting individual students. Although individual tutorials to review progress are only held at the end of each term, staff make arrangements to meet with students to provide personal support whenever this is necessary.

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

61. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are good. Staff are clear about the direction of the college and the central importance of meeting individual needs. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Communication between staff has improved and is regular and useful. Daily meetings, including meetings with students, ensure that staff are fully informed on day-to-day matters. In the self-assessment report the college accurately judged its provision in this area and identified most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. Actions identified in the development plan have been satisfactorily achieved. In several lessons observed, materials and activities were used effectively to promote equality and diversity.

**Notes**