



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Orchard Hill College

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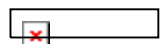
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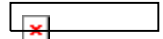
Basic information about the college



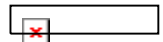
Name of college:	Orchard Hill College
Type of college:	Day, independent, specialist
Principal:	Caroline Allen
Address of college:	The Old Town Hall Woodcote Road Wallington Surrey SM6 0NB
Telephone number:	020 8254 7820
Fax number:	020 8254 9800
Chair of governors:	Mrs Mavis Peart OBE
Reference number*:	
Name of reporting inspector:	Charlie Henry HMI
Dates of inspection:	20 - 24 June 2005

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

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



Orchard Hill College is a non-residential national specialist college that provides full time and part time education for adults with severe/profound and complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many learners communicate using a range of strategies, both verbal and non-verbal, including the use of alternative and augmentative communication. Some students have additional support needs in relation to their emotional or behavioural challenges. The college also provides education for students requiring specialist support due to their visual or hearing impairments, as well as those with mental health issues. Speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and music therapy are important parts of the curriculum for many of the students.

The college has recently moved from its original base at Orchard Hill in Carshalton where it catered for the further education needs of long stay residents. The College is now situated in Wallington, still within the London Borough of Sutton. The new central location of the College provides students with many opportunities to be part of the local community. In response to growing demand, courses also take place at the Orchard Hill site and at a range of community venues, including students' homes.

The full-time Building Skills for Independence course is designed for school leavers and young adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who need a significant level of support within a college environment. It is aimed at those who wish to make a transition from school to adult life, continue a programme of general education and basic skills, increase their independence and develop their autonomy, self confidence and self reliance.

The College also offers a wide range of part time courses, the contents of which are built around the

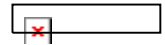
individual needs of the learners.

Students attend College from surrounding London boroughs and from Surrey. Currently the College receives National Specialist College funding from the LSC for eleven of the 32 students who attend the full time Building Skills for Independence course. The remaining 21 are currently funded by the LSC FE funding stream through a franchise arrangement with a local sector College, apart from one learner who is directly funded by Croydon LEA.

Part time students have various funding streams including the same LSC FE route, funding via adult and community learning (ACL) and some by direct payments.

There are equal numbers of male and female students in the college. Of the total eleven students funded directly by the LSC almost two thirds are female. Almost a third of all students, including about a half of the LSC funded students, are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

How effective is the college?



Orchard Hill College makes satisfactory provision for its students. Teaching and learning are good overall. Students make good progress in their personal and social skills and become more confident. Progress and achievement in communication are satisfactory. The college makes effective use of its position in the community and partnerships with others to promote equality of opportunity for its students. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

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Key strengths

- good personal and social development

- very good personal support

- very good team work

- good monitoring and recording of progress

- effective promotion of the dignity and equality of students

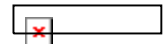
- very good leadership by the principal

What should be improved

- the use of signing and voice output and other communication aids
- provision of speech and language therapy and physiotherapy
- implementation of procedures for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

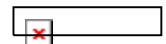
Further aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in the sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. The principal provides very good leadership. There is effective strategic planning and formal arrangements to manage the provision work well. The staff work very well together to meet effectively the changing needs of students. The move of the college to its new site has been managed very effectively. Through its thorough self-review and quality assurance processes the college knows what it does well and understands where it can improve. All staff are involved in the procedures and the consequent report is evaluative. Orchard Hill College has committed and hard working governors. Recently acquired statutory responsibilities are not yet fulfilled. Financial management is good and, overall, the college provides the provision defined within the LSC individual learner schedules. The college provides good value for money.

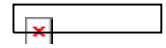
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to social inclusion is very good; it is good for education inclusion. All of the students have profound or severe and complex learning difficulties. Most have additional communication, physical or sensory disabilities or mental health difficulties. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds reflects the proportion within the local community. A new fully adapted college was recently completed providing high quality accommodation to meet the increasingly complex needs of the students. The philosophy of the college with the student at its heart permeates the work of all staff. Students are encouraged to make choices; they are respected and appear happy. The college actively promotes an understanding of all aspects of disability within the community. It

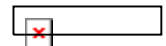
fulfils its legislative responsibilities regarding equality of opportunity and diversity. Provision for personal and social development is good; the development of communication skills is satisfactory. There is no provision for key skills as this is not appropriate to the needs of the students.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance for students are satisfactory. Personal support for students is very good and focuses on meeting individual needs and supporting students to make choices. Well-planned nursing support is effective at meeting students' personal health and dietary needs. Good communication with parents and carers is maintained through reviews and the college-home diary. Partnership links with the local Connexions service, and other specialist agencies are satisfactory, and are being used to enhance students' preparation for transition from the college. Transition arrangements are satisfactory overall. The implementation of procedures for safeguarding children and protecting vulnerable adults is slow. The college has recently developed policies and procedures for these areas but they are not yet implemented. There is insufficient provision of specialist speech and language and physiotherapy support. Recent arrangements have been made for a speech and language therapist to assess students, to identify their individual support needs and to provide some introductory training for staff. However, these have not yet been fully implemented and staff have not received appropriate training in the use of alternative and augmentative communication methods to enable them to fully support students' communication needs.

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

- staff are kind

- painting

- computer work

- swimming

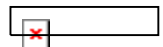
- going to the shops

- o playing music.

What they feel could be improved

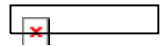
- o students did not identify any aspects of the college they did not like.

Other information

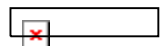


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college's action plan must show what action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

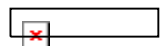


Scope of provision



1. All of the eleven LSC-funded students are following three-year individual programmes in communication, social and personal development and independent living skills. Ten of the students are in their first year; the other student is in the second year. All students have severe and complex or profound learning difficulties; many have additional difficulties relating to physical or sensory disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders or mental health difficulties. Curriculum activities include communication, literacy and numeracy, community studies, physical education, creative and cultural studies, information and communication technology and practical living skills. When in their third year, students undertake work experience within the college or within the local community. All students also use community facilities and amenities both for the development of independence skills and for their social and personal development.

Achievement and standards



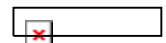
2. Students make good progress in developing personal and social skills. They make particularly good progress in improving their confidence. For example, in making choices, such as who to pass the ball to next in a games session. Another student shows his increased confidence by being less anxious about being in a room with others and, therefore, leaves the room less frequently. Attention and motivation also increase significantly for most students so that they are happy to spend more time on an activity. They improve their ability to work co-operatively with teachers and assistants and in small groups with other students. One student showed good social development in a music and drama session through the effective use of intensive interaction. The student was required to copy the actions of his member of staff, such as to touch his head; he was then able to lead this activity with the assistant copying from his lead.

3. Students make satisfactory progress in their communication skills. They increase their understanding of pictures and symbols, for example, to understand what they are going to do next or to select the ingredients for a recipe. Many also increase their use of objects of reference, where particular objects are associated to specific activities, for example, a rucksack that contains their spare clothes as the object to indicate they want to go to the toilet. A few students improve their writing, especially their name. A few have also increased their recognition of important signs when they are shopping. Similarly, a few students demonstrate they can count small numbers of items, for example, with items of fruit and vegetables or when scoring in skittles sessions, and can select the correct number card.

4. Progress is good with respect to students' previous attainments. The detailed cumulative summaries of achievements demonstrate how skills are continually built upon. For example, one student has become increasingly independent in her wheelchair and can now undertake simple errands, such as to escort visitors to the principal's office.

5. Retention rates are excellent, in line with similar independent specialist colleges. Since funding by the LSC is relatively recent there have not been any students who have left the provision and for whom destination information is available. Attendance and punctuality during the inspection were also excellent.

Quality of teaching, training and learning



6. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Almost two thirds of lessons observed were good; no lessons were unsatisfactory. A wide range of interesting activities are planned that hold students' interests and increase their attention. There is also sufficient flexibility to alter these plans if necessary, for example, due to behavioural changes for one student that have resulted from medication. The pace of lessons is brisk and ensures that students remain focused on the activities without losing interest. Occasionally a few students are not fully involved in lessons, either because the planned activity requires more staff than are present or because students have to wait for their turn in a group activity.

7. Staff use detailed knowledge and understanding of their students' needs well. They skilfully use this understanding to improve behaviour. Staff negotiate with their students rather than attempt to insist on their compliance. This results in successful participation in activities. A strength of the college is the way that staff work together as a team and they readily provide assistance whenever it is required. While each member of staff has specific students to work with they also have very good awareness of the needs of other students within the group.

8. All staff show very high respect for their students' individual needs and consistently promote their adult status. For example, in the activities they plan for learning and the resources they use, such as the wide range of music that supports work in many lessons. Staff routinely offer choices to students. In an art activity a teaching assistant and student were working together successfully to make a

collage. The member of staff asked if the student wished to stop for a break; the student replied that he wanted to continue with the activity and asked for the break later in the session.

9. Teachers and assistants use a range of resources to improve students' communication including objects of reference and pictures. In some lessons teachers and assistants use signing to help students understand what is being said, and encourage them to respond with signs that they know. However, in many lessons signing is not used sufficiently. For example, on a number of occasions members of staff asked students to sit down to take part in an activity. These requests were more frequently followed when accompanied by signing. Similarly, voice output and other communication aids were not used consistently in many lessons. In one lesson a set of simple communication aids that had pictures of each student were used effectively to encourage choice about who should have the next turn in a game of skittles.

10. There is a good match of the numbers of teachers and teaching assistants to meet the needs of the students. Almost all teachers are qualified, with a very small number currently undergoing training. Staff expertise is developed well through a broad range of professional development opportunities, which are identified through performance management and the college-wide self assessment.

11. The range and use of learning resources are also good. Many new resources were bought at the time of the move of the college to its new site. Information and communication technology resources are used effectively. For example, digital cameras record students' involvement in activities and the images are used for discussion about target setting and for demonstrating progress. Good use is also made of the interactive white boards. New equipment needs are routinely identified and purchased to meet the specific requirements of students. In addition, staff successfully develop their own resources to meet individual needs. A simple yet highly successful teacher-made resource was used in a games activity session. The teacher suspended a large, empty plastic water container from the ceiling directly above a set of skittles. This enabled students who have limited movement consistently to knock over the skittles. Risk assessments are good. There is careful consideration about potential risks in each activity, such as using the hydrotherapy pools, and how these relate to individual students' learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

12. The college accommodation is of high quality. The recent move of site has enabled the college to become a more prominent feature in the centre of the local community. This position is supported by the adult and community learning centre that is due to open on the same site at the beginning of the next term. All classrooms are bright and appealing learning environments; most rooms are spacious. In addition, there are specialist facilities, for example, for food preparation, with suitably adapted facilities for students who are wheelchair users or have other physical difficulties.

13. Monitoring and recording of progress is good overall. Staff have a very clear focus on the assessment of individual student's needs as a basis for planning. This includes their likes and dislikes, and areas for development. In addition, there is very good evaluation and recording of each student's progress towards achieving their personal targets. There is also a record of any significant changes in individual students' lives and any effect these have on their progress and behaviour. At the end of each day staff have a detailed discussion about how well each student has worked and how they might be helped to achieve more. This ongoing assessment provides information for the twice-yearly reviews and an annual summative record of progress and achievement. It also enable the college to build a year-on-year overall picture of progress.

14. Initial assessment is satisfactory but it is not routinely informed by specialist assessment such as speech and language therapy. Initial assessment involves the collection of information prior to the students' start at the college during a visit to their school. This form has recently been modified to include improved collection of information on therapy needs. More detailed initial assessment takes place over the first half-term at the college and includes assessment against the college's core curricular skills. This results in a satisfactory individual learning plan and individual objectives. There is satisfactory development of 'moving-on' passports to record progress and experience. This is a summative record of each student's interests, communication needs, achievements and other specific support needs recorded during their time at the college. Since funding by the LSC is relatively recent, the eleven students have not yet been involved in using their own 'moving-on'

passports as part of transition planning. The quality of individual student objectives varies. Some individual objectives in the cumulative record of progress are clear and measurable and are built upon to support further progress. In other instances, curriculum objectives are too broad and are not sufficiently specific or measurable. For example, one objective was to watch a task for longer. Another was for the student 'to use language to support how he shows how he likes something'.

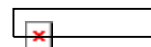
15. The curriculum is flexible and is well-structured with a good range of options to support the development of individual skills. Student programmes are individualised and are modified in response to the changing needs of individual students' identified through observation. For example, one student who was observed to like music had their programme modified to include music therapy. Good use is made of community facilities. Examples include the use of a college-devised nutritional guide for healthy eating based on food in a local supermarket, and the running of a local church coffee morning to support the development of social interaction and communication skills. Each of the three years of the curriculum is designed to prepare students for the next stage. Year one involves the development of foundation skills in literacy, numeracy and communication, personal and social development as well as community studies, practical living skills, physical education, creative and cultural studies and information and learning technology. There is a range of activities within each foundation area to meet individual needs. Year two involves a focus on developing individual vocational options and choices. Year three focuses on developing skills in preparation for transition.

16. The college has clear arrangements for carefully chosen external work placements for students, including gardening, work in local church coffee shops, and in the local library. Work experience is provided within the college for those students not yet ready for an external placement. Examples include gardening or helping the college's housekeeper. College staff work supportively with students to identify and prepare them for their preferred placement. The LSC-funded students have not yet reached this stage of their time in college. Recognition of achievements is through internally awarded certificates, the display of student photographs around the college and ongoing positive feedback.

17. Support and guidance for students are satisfactory. Personal support for students is very good and focuses on meeting individual needs and supporting students to identify and communicate their choices. Curriculum staff work well in teams to identify and support students' individual needs. Well-planned nursing support is effective at meeting students' personal health and dietary needs. Good support for six students with visual impairment has been provided through detailed assessment and guidance by the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB). This guidance has been implemented. The induction of students into the college is satisfactory and includes an initial visit and some preliminary links. Satisfactory information and advice is given to students and to parents and carers at the initial visit. Good communication with parents and carers is maintained through reviews and the college-home diary. The college-home diary includes feedback on students' daily activities and achievements as well as general information and communication on health, medical and behavioural issues. Partnership links with the local Connexions service and other specialist agencies are satisfactory and are being further developed. These links are used to prepare the students for transition from the college. Transition arrangements are satisfactory overall. However, the LSC-funded students have not yet reached the stage of preparing for transition.

18. The implementation of procedures for safeguarding children and protecting vulnerable adults is slow. The college has recently developed policies and procedures for these areas but they are not yet implemented. Staff have not had any training and are unclear who to contact in case of any concerns. The nominated child and vulnerable adult protection manager has not yet received training although this is planned. The policies are reviewed every two years. There is insufficient provision of specialist speech and language and physiotherapy support. Recent arrangements have been made for a speech and language therapist to assess students, to identify their individual support needs and to provide some introductory training for staff. However, these have not yet been fully implemented and staff have not received appropriate training in the use of alternative and augmentative communication methods to enable them to fully support students' communication needs. The college anticipates it will employ a speech and language therapist in the very near future. In addition, three part-time agency physiotherapists have been appointed recently to provide support while the college makes a permanent appointment.

Leadership and management



19. Leadership and management are good. The principal provides very good leadership for the day-to-day life of the college and is an outstanding advocate for the students within the community. The college has recently transferred locations. This complex transition for the people and the organisation has been managed very effectively. Governors and college staff have contributed effectively to the evolution of the college's ethos and their work consistently dignifies students and respects their independence. There is effective strategic planning and decision making. Governors are actively involved and help to determine college policy and strategy. They meet regularly to monitor and evaluate the direction, development and progress the college is making. College staff are very enthusiastic about their work and feel valued and well managed. Day-to-day management of the provision works well.

20. The self-assessment report is clear and rigorous. It provides a very good basis for planning the development and improvement of the college. The self-assessment joins strategy and operational matters into a coherent framework, presenting a comprehensive picture of college priorities and progress towards meeting them. All staff and governors are involved in its construction through the annual college development planning day. Weaknesses are picked up through the annual development plan and action taken is monitored. However, while the college has recognised through its self assessment that both the use of communication aids and the provision of specialist support therapies is unsatisfactory there has been insufficiently swift attention to addressing the problem.

21. Quality assurance procedures promote improvement and are well understood and appreciated by staff. A whole range of college work is subject to regular monitoring by managers and those responsible are given good quality feedback. For example, support for staff is differentiated providing effective formal and informal structures. A recent individual education plan review sampled documents and gave constructive and detailed guidance for improvement. Communication systems between staff and managers work well and help staff to do a good job with students.

22. The staff have formal opportunities to discuss their work with managers and well regarded regular staff meetings to share problems and discuss solutions. Performance management is linked to lesson observations. These observations have recorded outcomes that address characteristics of effective teaching well but are weaker on considering how well students are learning. External observers from Carshalton College effectively support the lesson observation systems adding rigour to the internal process. The outcomes of observations are constructively fed back to staff who appreciate the positive approach to improvement. Where weaknesses recur additional focused training is provided.

23. The college has developed a wide range of external links to develop further the opportunities for students and raise student achievements. Partners working with the college include Sutton LEA, general further education colleges, the Sutton College of Learning for Adults, local churches, the local library, Sutton post -14 partnership and local resident associations.

24. The racial equality policy has recently been updated and takes into account the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). Governors do not monitor the impact of this policy with sufficient rigour. The college has only recently taken students under the age of 19 but is slow in implementing the legislative requirements for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Governors do not yet monitor the implementation of this legislation with sufficient rigour. Policies relating to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) (SENDA) have recently been reviewed and take full account of this legislation.

25. The provision of support and training is under constant review and recent and substantial improvement to accommodation has been made possible by energetic and innovative approaches to raising funds. Individual learner schedules are regularly reviewed to ensure that the students receive

the support they need and the contracts with the local LSC are met. The fulfilment of these requirements is confirmed by the inspection. Resources are effectively deployed. Financial management is good. Orchard Hill College provides good value for money.

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