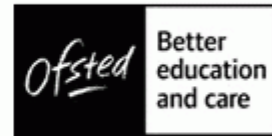




ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Bridge College

CONTENTS

[Basic information about the college](#)

[Part A: Summary](#)

[Information about the college](#)

[How effective is the college?](#)

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

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

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

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

[Students' view of the college](#)

[Other information](#)

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

[Achievement and standards](#)

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

[Leadership and management](#)

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

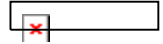
[Literacy, numeracy and communication](#)

[Life skills](#)

[Self/Creative](#)

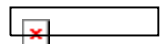
[Transitions](#)

Basic information about the college

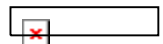


Name of college:	Bridge College
Type of college:	Day independent specialist
Principal:	Caroline Smale
Address of college:	Curzon Road Offerton Stockport Cheshire SK2 5DG
Telephone number:	0161 487 4293
Fax number:	0161 487 4294
Chair of trustees:	
Reference number*:	209782
Name of reporting inspector:	Gill Reay HMI
Dates of inspection:	21-25 February 2005

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

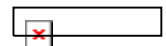


Bridge College was established by the Boys and Girls Welfare Society (BGWS) in 1993. The BGWS is a registered charity established in 1870 offering support, consultancy, social care and education services for about 1,800 children, young people and adults with a range of learning difficulties and disabilities including autistic spectrum disorders. The college is an independent day specialist college for students aged between 16 and 25 years and provides for students with severe and complex learning difficulties, physical disabilities, communication disorders and autistic spectrum disorders.

The college is situated about one mile from the centre of Stockport and students are drawn mainly from Stockport, Greater Manchester and the surrounding areas. Some 98 % of students are funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In the past nine years the college has grown from 43 to 71 LSC funded students. The profile of students has changed over time and in 2004 88 % of students

attending the college had severe and complex learning difficulties. The college has achieved a planned decrease of 50% in the proportion of students with profound and multiple learning difficulties and currently enrolls a small number of students with these difficulties. More recently, and in response to strategic planning by the BGWS, the college has increased its numbers of students on the autistic spectrum to 19 %. Some 33% of students are wheelchair users and 27 % of students have cerebral palsy. The majority of students have a communication disorder and access alternative and augmentative communication support; 17 % of students use communication aids. The college has been a Makaton Centre of Excellence since 2000. The gender balance is 51 % female and 49 % male and 15 % of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college curriculum is organised into the following curriculum strands: literacy; numeracy; communication; life skills; transitions; self and creative curriculum. The college's specialist resources include a hydrotherapy pool, physiotherapy suite and fitness area. The college employs its own team of paramedical staff, to include speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, nurses and an educational psychologist. The college's mission is 'To create an inclusive learning environment where young people are empowered to make a transition to adulthood by maximising independence and communication'. The college has ten core values which place the student at the 'centre' of all its work.

How effective is the college?



The college provides satisfactory teaching and opportunities for learning for most of its students. The standard of students' work overall is satisfactory. Students make good progress in the development of social and communication skills. Provision for transitions, literacy, numeracy, and communication is good and for life skills it is satisfactory. For self/creative, however, it is unsatisfactory.

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

Key strengths

- successful development of personal and social skills

- good achievement in communication

- wide range of work experience

- very good specialist resources and accommodation

- good specialist therapy and support

- thorough baseline assessment

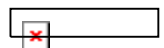
- very good personal support for students.

What should be improved

- unsatisfactory teaching
- inadequate accommodation
- assessment and support for visually impaired and English as a second language (ESOL) students
- quality assurance
- management and training of learning support workers
- analysis and use of data
- systematic promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity.

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 good teaching of literacy and communication and good achievement in communication and literacy. Specialist and additional resources to aid communication are very good. There are some missed opportunities to develop numeracy skills and insufficient initial assessment and support to meet the needs of ESOL students.
Life skills	Satisfactory: Students make satisfactory progress towards meeting their core and subject targets: they develop a range of appropriate skills. Teaching is satisfactory. Progress is well assessed and rewarded and a diverse range of activities is provided. Accommodation, support and aspects of quality assurance are inadequate
Self/creative	Unsatisfactory: The majority of teaching is satisfactory and tutorial support is good. Classroom resources are good although accommodation is cramped. Planning for learning and the recording of student progress is insufficiently rigorous. Quality assurance and the deployment of learning support staff are ineffective.
Transitions	Good: Teaching is variable there is insufficient challenge for the least and more able students and ineffective deployment of learning support workers. An effective work experience programme enables students to achieve good standards of independence and work related skills. There is also very good support for students who are moving to further education or employment. Aspects of quality assurance are ineffective.

How well is the college led and managed?

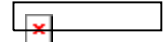
Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communication across the college is good, and the college's mission is widely understood. Strategic and development planning are thorough, and the college has met its key performance targets. Students improve their social and communication skills. Provision for staff development is good. Accommodation is not adequate: it is not fully adapted for wheelchair users and classrooms are too cramped. Although quality assurance procedures are detailed there are weaknesses in their implementation. For example the college profile of grades awarded at teaching observations is significantly more generous than those found at inspection. Staff have received training in relation to the requirements of the Special Educational Needs Disability Act (SENDA) (2001) and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). However, the college is not yet compliant with part four of SENDA in relation to its buildings. Governance and financial management are satisfactory and the requirements of the learner schedules are met. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. The college provides for students with a wide range of complex needs. Students are mainly from Greater Manchester, but increasingly attend from a wider area. Eleven students are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and there is a balance between the numbers of male and female students. The college has updated its equal opportunity policies and meets the main requirements of the Race Relations

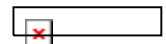
(Amendment) Act (2000). A fully costed and agreed plan to ensure full accessibility for wheelchair users is in place and work is planned to start in March 2005. At the time of inspection the college was not fully accessible for wheelchair users. The college has been slow to respond to the need for an ESOL initial assessment. The complaints procedures are satisfactory. All staff have criminal records bureau checks and have received training and information about child and vulnerable adult protection procedures. Provision for literacy, numeracy and communications is good.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance are good. Students receive very good personal support from their tutors and, informally, from all members of staff. This contributes successfully to improving their personal and social skills. Assessment and support by specialist therapists are good in most aspects and are very good in communication. However, timely identification and provision of support for students who have a visual impairment or for whom English is a second language is insufficient. Induction for new students is detailed. Information for parents/carers about how well their son or daughter is making progress is good. There is an effective link with the local Connexions service and 70 % of students progressed to further education courses in 2004. The college meets its responsibilities with regard to safeguards and has satisfactory policies and procedures for the protection of the students. Punctuality and attendance are monitored well and successful action is taken to resolve any difficulties.

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

- some students say everything

- going to North Area college

- staff

- computers

- snooker at lunch times.

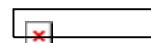
What they feel could be improved

- not enough activities at lunchtime

- being signed to when I can hear and talk

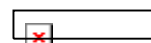
- choice in transitions.

Other information

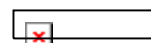


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college's action plan must show what action 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. A minority of students are aged 16 to 18 years and all lessons contain students between 16 and 25 years of age. Therefore for the purposes of this report no difference is made between the achievements of these two groups of students.

2. A satisfactory range of nationally recognised awards is used where these are seen as contributing to students' future needs, although the number of students entered for these awards has declined since 2001. They include, cookery and communication skills development, including awards for Makaton signing and the use of specialist tools to aid communication. Achievement of qualifications does not drive the curriculum and there is a wide range of achievement by individual students. In addition the college awards its own certificates to all students for success in achieving their individual goals. A few students extend their studies by attending courses at other local colleges, for example, working towards an information technology (IT) certificate, and by visiting a local day centre for adults who have learning difficulties. Exceptional achievement not specifically related to

identified targets is recorded through a 'momentous moments' system for example attending the surgery and collecting medicine. Most students make satisfactory progress throughout their stay at college.

3. For the last five years the college has operated a system of setting subject and core targets for each student. This system has developed over time and in 2004 a learner focus and pen portrait were added to students' individual learning plans in order to clarify achievement further.

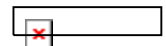
4. The monitoring and recording of individual students' achievements are mostly good. All students have core and subject targets that are reviewed regularly. There are also identified targets for literacy, numeracy and communication. Progress against anticipated individual achievement is monitored termly and reviewed at curriculum strand level and includes the use of a visual 'traffic light' system. Teachers regularly review progress with every student. Most students make good progress against the individual targets, but insufficient demands are made of some students and the small steps of learning are not planned for or recorded.

5. There is good provision of work experience for students. A high proportion of students take part in internal and external work experience placements and develop good work related skills. For example, in 2003 -2004, 40 students successfully completed work experience placements. There are good links with colleges of further education.

6. Most students make good progress in developing their self-confidence, and improving their social and communication skills. The standard of students' work in lessons is satisfactory. In particular, students' work in communication is good. However, achievements in the self/ creative strand are limited and there is insufficiently rigorous planning for and recording of progress in lessons.

7. Student destinations are monitored carefully. In 2004, 70 % of students continued in further or adult education after leaving college. The student retention rate is 96 % and is in line with other specialist colleges. Attendance in lessons during the inspection was 90 %.

Quality of teaching, training and learning



8. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. The majority of lessons were judged as satisfactory or better and this matches the national average for independent specialist colleges. However, there was no outstanding teaching and a significant proportion is unsatisfactory. The college enrolls an increasing number of students with significant difficulties in speech and communication. As a consequence, staff have developed a strong focus on communication with, where appropriate, the use of communication aids. A particular strength is the effective use of a range of teaching and learning techniques that encourage all students to communicate, for example the use of Makaton signing alongside the use of speech. In better lessons planning is good and teachers take every opportunity to engage students in learning and activities. The college's multi-disciplinary approach to teaching is also effective, for example where occupational therapists work along side teachers in the classroom. Students benefit when therapeutic staff work along side teachers and are able to offer specialist advice and support to staff and students. However, not all new learning support workers have received this support as yet.

9. In a significant minority of lessons the needs of more and less able students are not met, nor are they fully engaged in learning. A major emphasis is placed on setting and monitoring targets for achievement in students' individual learning plans. However, some of the targets are too broadly set and the small steps achieved by students are not recorded. In a few lessons, teachers use approaches to learning and language that are inappropriate for the age of the students.

10. Learning support workers are not always well deployed or used to full advantage during lessons.

In a significant number of lessons teachers and learning support assistants did not have sufficient understanding of students' complex physical, cognitive and behavioural support needs. In many lessons aspects of support were unsatisfactory. For example, some members of staff complete parts of students' tasks and some are insufficiently skilled to manage challenging behaviour.

11. Teachers are well qualified. All have a first degree, teaching qualifications and most have additional specialist qualifications. Medical and therapy teams are also well qualified. Staff have access to extensive professional development activities that relate closely to their appraisal and to the college's operational targets. Although currently there is a group of learning support workers undertaking accreditation in learning support 47 % have no qualification in either literacy or numeracy at level two or below. However, 82 % of support staff are trained up to Makaton foundation level. About three quarters of the senior support workers hold a Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) stage one qualification. The induction programme for new staff provides an effective introduction to the college as an organisation.

12. The college has developed a very good range of specialist equipment to assist individual students with their communication. Learning materials are good, commercially produced resources combine well with those created in-house. The information learning technology (ILT) strategy is effective and the information communication technology (ICT) suite has a good range of equipment. The light and sound room is also well resourced and benefits students in need of a sensory curriculum.

13. A significant proportion of the college's accommodation and estate is inadequate, for example the car park, ramps to external doors and corridors. The college has acknowledged this in their self-assessment report and has plans in place to meet the requirements of the current SENDA legislation. Some teaching takes place in classrooms that are too small for the group size. This creates difficulties for teachers both in the management of learning support workers and in planning student activities.

14. The BGWS has recently updated its health and safety policies and procedures for the organisation as a whole. A detailed audit of Bridge college's health and safety procedures by the BGWS is scheduled for February 2005. The college has recently upgraded a part-time health and safety officer to a full-time position. Subject and individual risk assessments for students are detailed but attention to health and safety issues in practical lessons, for example in horticulture is poor.

15. Pre-admission assessment is satisfactory. It draws together detailed information from a wide range of sources, including parents, carers and students' previous schools. Sometimes this information gathering begins two years before admission. The pre-admission assessment concludes with a day visit to the college when specialist therapy staff review information they have previously gathered and undertake some further assessment, if necessary. The subsequent report does not, however, effectively summarise the results of this assessment process; in particular, there is very little information about students' curriculum achievements. A few important aspects of the identification of students' needs are not adequately covered during the pre-admission assessment. For example, there is insufficient assessment of the nature and extent of the visual impairment of a few students and of any specific language needs for those who may have English as a second language. The college is aware of these weaknesses and has begun to address them.

16. The baseline assessment of students is good. Information obtained before students attend the college is built upon during their first term to establish their levels of skills in the different strands of the curriculum. This assessment is used to determine the priorities for learning both as core targets to be tackled across all curriculum strands, as well as subject specific targets. Most of these targets are appropriate to meet students' needs. Staff routinely record how well these targets are met and show how well students are learning. However, a few targets are too broad for this monitoring to be effective.

17. Annual reviews are thorough and clear. Regular, detailed reports inform parents and carers about how well their son or daughter is making progress. This information is enhanced by the diaries that students keep to show important aspects of their learning. Digital photographs are used well to contribute to this recording of progress, especially when put together in 'speaking albums' where

each picture is accompanied by a short recorded message to explain what has been learned.

18. There is a satisfactory range of learning activities within the curriculum to meet students' needs. The curriculum is organised in four strands; communication; literacy and numeracy; life skills; self/creative and transition. Each student's timetable is made up of an individualised programme from each of these curriculum strands. Work experience is a very effective part of this curriculum. Most students undertake work experience on site, for example, by working alongside the college's service staff. A few extend this to take part in placements in the community, such as in supermarkets and fast food restaurants. If requested by a student the college arranges work experience to build on placements carried out when at school and to contribute towards longer term vocational ambitions, for example, in catering. There is also a good range of activities across the curriculum. A few of these are specifically designed to meet the needs of particular groups within the college, for example, sports for wheelchair users and swimming for female Muslim students, as well as men's and women's group.

19. The timetabled curriculum is extended well by a range of enrichment activities. These include sports, lunchtime clubs, such as ICT and facilities, for example, the sensory room, the students' common room and pool. A programme of events takes place on each Friday afternoon from which students are able to choose their preferences, including aromatherapy, creative crafts and car washing. Some of these activities have been specifically asked for by students. The college also organises sports events, for example, the boccia league and nearby professional football matches. Other trips, including one to Blackpool are arranged for those who use communication aids. In addition the college organises residential trips, often to outdoor pursuit centres in the Lake District, which many students are able to attend.

20. Students and their parents/carers receive good information about the college prior to starting. Visits by staff to schools, open days at the college, home visits and the prospectus ensure that they understand what the college has to offer. Information is available in a range of formats for example compact disc and translated text. However, no minicom is available to reception staff.

21. The induction of new students to the college is very effective. Once the decision has been made for a student to attend they begin a series of link days at the college, usually accompanied by a member of staff from their current school. At the start of their first term students spend the first two weeks in their own tutor group. They then begin their first term's timetable, when they sample all the different curriculum strands. Students and their parents appreciate how well these arrangements work.

22. The specialist therapy staff are very effective. Occupational therapists, a physiotherapist and an educational psychologist work very closely with teaching and support staff in the classrooms. They provide advice and guidance as they work with individual students. Speech and language therapy is particularly successful in the development of students' communication skills. Therapists are skilled in the assessment of students' needs and in training staff in appropriate strategies. Further expertise is available from specialist staff in the local community, including clinical psychologists and audiologists. However, students who have a visual impairment or the few for whom English is a second language are not identified or provided for quickly.

23. Students receive very good personal support from tutorial sessions when they review their targets and plan further ones. Tutors know their students very well and provide considered advice about behaviour and other issues, such as the development of relationships. Students also receive very good support from the informal day-to-day guidance and encouragement from all staff. Students reported they felt well supported. This support contributes very well towards the progress students make in their personal and social development.

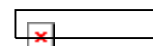
24. While arrangements are made to enable some students to meet the worship requirements of their faith such needs are not routinely considered and discussed with the student and their parents/carers as they begin at the college. A few parents report that students travel excessively long and tiring journeys of up to two and a half hours each way in order to attend the college.

25. Overall, satisfactory transition arrangements are in place. Individual learning plans include reference to the most likely next placement and discussion about this takes place in all review meetings. Effective arrangements with the local Connexions partnership ensure there are meetings with all students where planning for the future can continue. The main transition planning takes place in the autumn term of students' third year. Most students attend general further education and sixth form colleges after leaving Bridge. For example 70 % of all students progressed to further education in 2004. Once decisions are made about placements there are good arrangements to make the transition smooth, including a series of visits to the next placements, supported by Bridge college staff.

26. The arrangements for ensuring the protection of children and vulnerable adults are satisfactory. The college's policy has been reviewed. There is regular training for all staff and the college's designated protection officer receives additional training annually. All staff questioned were aware they must report any concerns they have. All new staff, including temporary and agency staff, are checked with the Criminal Records Bureau and are not allowed to work alone with a student until this has been completed.

27. Good arrangements are in place to monitor and ensure good attendance and punctuality. Attendance during the inspection was good at around 90 % and in line with that of other specialist colleges.

Leadership and management



28. Leadership and management are satisfactory. General communication across the college is good. Staff and other stakeholders are well aware of the college's mission and aims. The communication systems across the college are comprehensive. Staff and students are kept informed of operational issues on a daily basis by the use of central notice boards and displays. A particularly effective method of communication is the use of a morning tannoy, which updates everyone in the college. Members of staff have email addresses. A useful handbook for staff, with updates about students and important diary dates is produced on a termly basis. Key meetings are held regularly. The principal reports to BGWS' director of educational services and they meet every two weeks. All teachers meet the vice-principal on Monday mornings. Staff view these meetings as a good forum for the sharing of information. The student council meets weekly and issues of concern are acted upon. However, within the curriculum teams, regular meetings are relatively new. Arrangements for staff supervision and support are satisfactory. Support staff have termly supervision, and teaching staff have individual meetings with their line managers twice a term. These meetings are minuted. Day-to-day operational management and the management of most of the curriculum strands is satisfactory.

29. College strategic and development plans are detailed. Action plans are routinely monitored, and any actions not addressed are rolled over to the next year. The college has met its key performance targets and continues to provide a service in which students make good progress in the development of communication, social and independence skills. The number of leavers moving into further education colleges has increased from 33 % in 2002 to 70 % in 2004. The number of students has increased by a third over the past three years. The college has achieved a planned decrease of 50 % in the proportion of students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The college management information system provides good information about students' programmes, but is not sufficiently flexible to provide all of the information the college requires. The college is planning to commission a bespoke system.

30. Despite the planned decrease in the number of students with profound and complex needs, the accommodation is not adequate for wheelchair users, and the overall rise in student numbers has put pressure on the overall space available. Although BGWS has plans to improve the accommodation, it is currently too cramped for the number of students, particularly those with

autistic spectrum disorders, who moved from a rural location to the main site at the beginning of the academic year. The college has employed 13 new support workers from September 2004 to meet the needs of students with more complex needs. The college has also used agency and temporary staff to cover absence. The numbers of learning support workers with specialist expertise required to meet the needs of students with complex needs are not always sufficient in lessons.

31. The college provides an extensive professional development programme. Staff induction covers a range of significant issues related to the work of the college, with introductory awareness training. The appraisal process feeds directly into the staff development plan, which is comprehensive. The college runs five in-service training days, with the content based on outcomes from appraisal and strategic priorities. For the past year these priorities have included behaviour planning, working with students on the autistic spectrum disorder and equality. These events are well attended and fully evaluated. The training offered raises awareness, but is not always in sufficient depth to have an impact on teaching and learning.

32. The quality assurance procedures are comprehensive and detailed, extending to all aspects of college life. These procedures are implemented as part of an annual cycle and are communicated to staff via the termly staff handbook. Changes are implemented as a result of feedback. However, there are weaknesses in the implementation of the procedures. Staff have significant involvement in the self-assessment process and the preparing of the report and the action plan, although not all weaknesses identified during the inspection were identified in the action plans. However, the meeting of targets in the action plans is sometimes slow at departmental level, and the self-assessment report is insufficiently self-critical in some areas of the curriculum. In particular lessons, across all curriculum strands, the support provided did not encourage learning. The grade profile of lessons seen during the inspection is lower than that of the college in all strands of the curriculum. The college observation of teaching scheme does not include grades for agency and temporary staff. During the week of the inspection higher than usual levels of absence resulted in staff covering for absent colleagues and an increased use of agency staff.

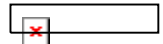
33. The college has a large number of relevant policies that are regularly updated. These include procedures for complaints, child and adult protection as well as policies related to personal relationships and sexuality. Managers have made recent progress in the implementation of equality and diversity. The policies on equality have been updated to reflect recent legislation. The college does not fully comply with SENDA although the disability audit is comprehensive and identifies clearly areas for improvement. Progress has been made in implementing the action plan, but the college is not yet fully accessible for wheelchair users. The necessary work has been costed and funding secured. The college publicity is available in alternative formats. Students with a registered visual impairment do not have a low vision assessment as part of the initial assessment process. The college has a race equality policy, as required under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000, and has started to implement it. Staff have received training. The college has monitored its enrolments by race, but has not yet analysed the findings. Data on monitoring of staff, collected by BGWS, shows that the college currently employs 2 % of staff from a minority ethnic background. This represents an increase of 1 % for 2003-2004. Staff are required to identify their training needs in relation to equality and diversity at their appraisal, and include them in their teaching. Aspects of difference, such as cultural and religious festivals, have been recognised and celebrated. Most recently, students worked on themes related to the Chinese New Year. Men's groups and women's groups are held each week. The prospectus has recently been translated into Urdu. However promotion of equality and diversity is uneven. Many staff promote aspects of disability well, but are less confident about other aspects of equality.

34. Governance is satisfactory. BGWS has a board of trustees that receives a chair's report from Bridge college's advisory board, which meets at least once a term. Over the past year, BGWS has revised the articles and instruments of governance. These will become operational shortly. Bridge governors see themselves as serving the function of a 'critical friend' of the college. The chair and one other governor are on the main board of trustees, and the BGWS director of education currently acts as clerk to the meetings. The Bridge college governors receive detailed reports from the principal. These provide updates in relation to key performance indicators. The governors are actively involved in the life of the college. In particular they have been involved in the development of equality and diversity procedures, and in the monitoring of teaching and learning. They are actively

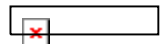
seeking to increase the number of governors. No governors are from black or minority ethnic backgrounds. The BGWS trustee has overall responsibility for the college, and monitors the finances and overall strategic planning.

35. Financial management is satisfactory. BGWS has responsibility for the setting of the budget, which is monitored monthly with a report to the treasury committee. The financial position is stable. However, there is no service level agreement between the college and BGWS for the services provided to the college, and LSC funding is not separated from other sources of income in the monthly reports. The support and provision for students meet the requirements of the learner schedules, and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Literacy, numeracy and communication



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

Strengths

- good achievement in communication and literacy
- good teaching in literacy and communication
- very good resources in specialist communication.

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment and support for ESOL needs
- insufficient attention to the development of numeracy skills in a significant minority of lessons.

Scope of provision

36. Whilst literacy, numeracy and communication targets are included in the college's four curriculum strands a significant proportion of the provision is taught in discrete lessons. Literacy,

numeracy and communication offer a range of opportunities to support independent living skills and students' personal development. All students have agreed targets for literacy, numeracy and communication linked to the national adult core curriculum and opportunities to achieve these targets are provided through all strands of the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

37. Achievement in communication skills and literacy is good and is recorded through external and internal accreditation from pre-entry to level 1. The college records the wide ranging achievement through photographs, compact discs, powerpoint presentations, completed worksheets, videos and alternative communication media. Students work towards individual learning targets developed from a thorough baseline assessment. Progress is recorded against core targets across all curriculum strands. Students develop communication skills, able students demonstrate good independent study skills and confidence to articulate their needs and to work with others through projects. The production of the 'alternative prospectus' was an outcome of one project providing the students with an opportunity to reflect accurately their view of the college through image, commentary, video clips and ICT. A less able student with an autistic spectrum disorder who became agitated during a lesson was supported to manage their behaviour through strong signing and use of tone by the teacher. Achievement in numeracy, although satisfactory, is less well developed than in communication and literacy.

Quality of education and training

38. There is good teaching of literacy and communication. In the most effective lessons planning includes tasks to meet individual targets for communication, literacy and numeracy, and challenging activities that motivate and engage all students. ICT is well used and allows links to be made to a wide range of programmes that link to all strands of the curriculum. Good use is made of external speakers: for example, a media professional was working with the 'Newspaper Group' and provided an opportunity for students to discuss editorial control, merits of a good action or still photographs, media bias and identifying the circulating group. Relevant vocabulary is used and students' understanding of the working terms is reinforced through the development of the college newspaper. Skilful use is made of questioning and prompts to encourage students to find answers and staff allow time for students' responses. Staff demonstrate re-direction strategies to effectively manage inappropriate and disruptive behaviour. The college shop provides a practical working environment for students to develop numeracy and interpersonal skills. Projects are used effectively to establish an integrated learning approach for communication, literacy and numeracy. Two students were planning a visit to a museum and were comparing transport costs, journey times and time management to ensure they would be back at the college for their home transport. However, despite examples of good skills development, across the whole college, opportunities are lost for students to develop their numeracy skills due to insufficient staff experience or knowledge, particularly for students with more complex needs.

39. The college has a successful total communication programme supported by a wide range of resources from simple symbol cards to electronic communicators enabling all students' voices to be heard. Very good alternative and augmentative communication resources effectively meet the needs of most students. Although some students who are able to communicate using speech reported that they disliked being continuously signed to. The college is a Makaton centre of excellence. Resources used are mainly age appropriate. The staff-student ratio is good with well-qualified teaching staff. Staff development is promoted and there is a strong training ethos throughout the college. The college is supporting staff to achieve level two literacy and numeracy awards. For students who require bilingual support for first language development support is insufficient. Some teaching accommodation is cramped.

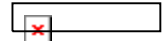
40. A comprehensive baseline assessment including speech and language therapy is developed over the first term for the majority of students. Students' progress is well monitored and recorded during tutorials, team meetings and review. Students evaluate their progress with staff. They use their diaries to record their progress and as a vocabulary resource for personal reference. For a few ESOL students assessment is not sufficiently timely in establishing their needs.

41. The student council provides a good opportunity for students to contribute to the college decision-making process. Students have a personal tutor and expressed satisfaction with the support given through the tutorial system and the informal opportunities to speak with staff.

Leadership and management

42. Leadership and management are satisfactory. All staff are involved in the self-assessment report, but insufficient attention has been given to the development of numeracy skill across the curriculum. Effective weekly staff meetings provide a forum for monitoring students' progress, planning and reviewing the programmes offered. Although the team have recognised the need for additional assessment and support for ESOL students the process is slow to respond to the needs of the individual students. Equality and diversity are strongly promoted in relation to disability but are not so well developed in relation to gender and ethnicity.

Life skills



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- good learning resources in dedicated rooms

- good assessment and recording of progress

- diverse range of activities in programmes to meet individual needs.

Weaknesses

- inadequate accommodation in multi-purpose areas

- unsatisfactory aspects of support in many lessons

- inadequate quality assurance.

Scope of provision

43. All students attend some part of the life skills curriculum strand that comprises domestic, sport and leisure and community activities. Domestic activities include cookery courses, a lunch club and

a take-away meal club. Sport and leisure courses cover health and fitness. Community activities include shopping for cooking ingredients, a scheme for shopping for elderly people and community visits. Enrichment activities and an annual residential are organised. The team is led by the curriculum manager and comprises two permanent full time-teachers, two temporary teachers and two senior support workers.

Achievement and standards

44. Students make satisfactory progress towards achieving their core and subject specific targets. They learn to relate confidently to peers and staff and make choices and decisions. Students learn to express themselves better in speech and Makaton or with voice output communication aids. Some develop strategies for managing their behaviour and looking after their personal belongings. In food preparation lessons, students remember nutritional guidelines, identify ingredients and operate domestic appliances. Students follow health, safety and hygiene procedures and evaluate their work. In sports and fitness activities students demonstrate appropriate skills when using fitness machines; remembering warm up routines; understanding the rules of games and taking part in matches.

Quality of education and training

45. Teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are generally well-planned and sustain students' interest. Teachers set manageable targets and maximise students' opportunities for choice and decision. They support students in taking a lead role in sports activities or in working in groups in cookery lessons. However, not all teachers have the specialist knowledge to manage the behaviour of students with autistic spectrum disorders. Teachers sometimes use language and intonation inappropriate for young adults. Lessons do not always have sufficient material to fill the time or to replace failed equipment. Written information for students is not always presented in accessible font. Some handouts contain errors of grammar or punctuation.

46. There are good learning resources in specialist rooms. The cookery room has adjustable height sinks and hobs and a good selection of appliances with a range of different switches. The hydrotherapy pool is well resourced for aquatic exercise. The fitness suite has a good range of exercise and fitness machines and equipment. There is a satisfactory collection of equipment for indoor sports and games. Students use carefully chosen communication aids that improve their communication skills. Students on sports courses have good access to a very large community sports hall. Teaching staff are well qualified but not necessarily in the specialists areas in which they teach. Many support staff are insufficiently skilled

47. Accommodation for lessons in shared areas is unsatisfactory. The hall used for indoor sports suffers from noise interference. The need to clear equipment away each break time and to set it up afterwards entails a loss of time to students. An adapted classroom for additional food preparation lessons is too small and contains insufficient equipment for all students. Corridors are too narrow for wheelchair passage. There are no automatic doors.

48. Assessment and recording of progress are good. A comprehensive baseline assessment during the first term leads to detailed pictures of students' strengths and needs. Teachers make careful records of progress against students' subject and core targets at the end of every lesson. Students are closely involved in evaluating their own performance. The most recent format for showing achievements towards subject targets is well-designed. It shows photographs of relevant equipment or activity and is valued by students who do not read print. However, a few teachers overestimate students' progress.

49. A diverse range of activities within programmes is planned to meet individual needs. Cookery courses provide a progression route from learning to prepare a snack to taking a nationally recognised preliminary cookery certificate. Students use the local community to shop for ingredients. Others provide a shopping service for elderly people. Sports and fitness activities include courses for women whose cultural or religious practices prevent mixed activities. Students with profound and complex needs attend sensory sports and cookery. Visits to sports fixtures and occasional visits to places of interest are arranged. However, there are insufficient opportunities for students to learn to

travel independently.

50. Aspects of support in lessons are unsatisfactory. Some support staff complete parts of students' tasks or do not involve them sufficiently in decisions. Some are insufficiently familiar with adjustable equipment. Few staff are able to support students effectively with literacy and numeracy. Some are insufficiently skilled at managing challenging behaviour. One-to-one support by teachers and experienced support staff keeps students focused and helps them to work as independently as possible. Occupational therapists provide skilled and sensitive support in lessons and guidelines to support staff. The speech and language therapist provides guidelines for working with students with behaviour difficulties.

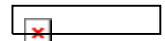
Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Quality assurance is unsatisfactory. Lesson observations do not recognise weaknesses in teaching and support. Grades awarded are over-generous. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate in the grade awarded but lacks sufficient details of weaker aspects of provision. Individual course reviews by teachers and support staff are not rigorously carried out. They do not sufficiently inform the self-assessment report. Actions in the annual development plan to address weaknesses have resulted in improvements. However, actions are not all completed by the due date at the end of the academic year. Milestones towards the achievement of quality improvements are not identified. Monitoring of schemes of work for equality and diversity does not identify weaknesses in the way these two aspects are addressed.

52. Equality and diversity are insufficiently promoted. Understanding of race is generally limited to an awareness of the celebrations and dietary customs of different cultures. Although there is some provision for women and for students whose cultural or religious practices prevent mixed activities there is little proactive teaching to develop students' awareness of race and gender issues. However, staff have attended training in the requirements of recent legislation. The fitness curriculum now includes more separate provision for women and for students whose cultural or religious practices prevent mixed activities. The wishes of families about specific cultural observances are passed on to staff and followed.

53. Curriculum coordination has improved since weaknesses were identified in the self-assessment report and operational leadership and management are now satisfactory. Weekly team meetings take place and are minuted. Teaching staff attend a wide range of training events. However, there is insufficient training and development for support staff.

Self/Creative



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

Strengths

- good classroom-based resources

- good tutorial support.

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning for learning

- insufficiently rigorous recording of students' progress

- ineffective deployment of learning support staff

- ineffective quality assurance.

Scope of provision

54. The self/creative curriculum strand offers a range of learning opportunities to enrich the development of communication, supported independence, personal and social skills. The curriculum strand also aims to promote students' awareness of themselves and others through improving self-esteem, confidence, assertiveness and creativity. Activities include art, music, drama, craft and men and women's groups and the sensory curriculum for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. All students follow the self/creative curriculum strand in their first term at the college. Further study in this area depends on individual student needs and interests.

Achievement and standards

55. The first term baseline assessment is thorough and results in the setting of individual core targets that are used across the college. Classroom activities within the self/creative curriculum strand are used to assess students' progress towards achievement of their cross college core targets for example craft activities or preparation for the celebration of a multi cultural event. The recording and students' achievement of core targets within the self/ creative curriculum strand are insufficiently rigorous and do not include the small incremental developmental steps of learning. For example a student with a target of 'request an item/tool or equipment' will only have that target recorded when an item or tool has been requested and the small steps which lead up to that request such as recognising the tool, stating the request in an appropriate way, at an appropriate time and other relevant details are not recorded. Recording of outcomes of learning of practical activities in art, music and drama is insufficiently rigorous.

Quality of education and training

56. Although the majority of teaching is satisfactory or better a significant number of lessons were unsatisfactory or very poor. In the most successful lessons teachers are sensitive to the variations in individual students' readiness to take part in learning by providing activities that are well structured. In a lesson in the sensory room two students with profound and multiple difficulties developed communication skills and made choices through the skilful use of music, lights and a range of differently textured artefacts. In a significant number of lessons teachers and learning support assistants do not demonstrate that they have sufficient knowledge of the more complex physical, cognitive and behavioural needs of students. A significant minority of lessons overemphasise that all students should complete a similar task or activity despite their different levels of physical or cognitive ability. Although students are actively encouraged to interact with their fellow students throughout their lessons in the self/ creative curriculum strand, most lessons have a slow start with

too much time being spent on students saying hello to each other in turn. Teachers' responses to students' inappropriate behaviours do not help to engage students in planned learning activities. Classroom activities are inadequately planned to meet the different needs of students, the more able students are not sufficiently challenged. One student had taken an active and productive part in a student discussion, but when attending a lesson immediately after the meeting covered her head with her coat and announced she was bored during an over long introduction to the lesson.

57. The deployment and direction of learning support assistants is unsatisfactory in the majority of lessons. Some learning assistants are passive and give inadequate support to students whilst others are over directive, interrupt learning and complete tasks for students.

58. Staff-student ratios are high, although the class numbers are sometimes high for one teacher to manage. Resources within lessons are good, with a wide range of materials and audio visual aids for craft, painting and music activities. The light and sound room is also well resourced and benefits students in need of a sensory curriculum. The college hall does not provide a suitable venue for drama activities due to frequent interruptions for access as well as noise interference from the adjacent kitchen. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. The art studio is untidy and has too little space for the number of students in the class.

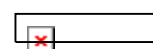
59. The pre-entry assessment is informed by parents' views and school records of students' achievements. All students take part in time tabled self/creative lessons during the first term of the first year at Bridge college. The baseline assessment developed over the first term is comprehensive and clearly identifies students' achievements and capabilities in relation to self and creative art. The student diary records activities in which students have been involved, providing for the student a record of their achievements as well as a useful prompt for recalling prior learning. Students value their diaries and take a pride in sharing the experiences that are recorded.

60. Students value the support they receive from staff across the college. Personal tutorials are effective. During a personal tutorial an experienced teacher encouraged a quiet and reticent student to discuss a recent visit to a day centre that may be a potential progression route for the student. Using his voice output communication aid the student was sensitively encouraged to express his likes and dislikes in relation to what he had seen during his visit. Although staff are fluent in the use of Makaton constant signing is not appreciated by some students who use speech as their preferred method of communication.

Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Quality assurance is ineffective. The formal appraisal system and associated staff development activities, which are valued by staff, have not improved the quality of teaching and learning. The self-assessment report is insufficiently critical and did not identify key weaknesses identified by inspectors. The college lesson observation scheme is over generous in the grading of observations of teaching and learning. Equality and diversity are not effectively promoted in lessons. The weekly staff meeting provides a useful opportunity for staff to share information as well as to plan and review activities and students' progress. Senior managers have developed a good range of external links to support training and development within the independent college sector and to increase knowledge and understanding of issues relating to students with a range of complex disabilities within the local area.

Transitions



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

Strengths

- much good student achievement
- very effective work experience programme and good development of work-related skills
- good transitional support for students moving to further education or employment.

Weaknesses

- insufficient challenge for the least and more able students
- ineffective quality assurance.

Scope of provision

62. The transitions curriculum area focuses on preparing students for the next destination after Bridge College. Work related skills are developed through a range of activities designed to encourage formal transition planning. These include horticulture courses, in-house and external work experience, visits to a wide variety of FE colleges and other providers'. Aspects of the transitions strand are followed by all students throughout their time at Bridge. The formal transition programme takes place in the final year.

Achievement and standards

63. Students achieve high standards in independence, personal and work related skills. These are developed through real situations both within the college and through the 'College Services' activities and in external work placements. Communication, functional literacy and some aspects of numeracy are well developed and integrated into lesson planning. As a result students are able to learn and follow routines with confidence such as replenishing a vending machine, maintaining the public areas at a fast food restaurant and preparing for a sale of home produced goods. A variety of appropriate accredited and non-accredited programmes enable students to achieve. Achievement is recognised informally during the course of everyday activities. Many students progress to public sector colleges as their next step.

Quality of education and training

64. Teaching is satisfactory. The best lessons are well planned using a range of well planned activities. Most staff have high expectations and know their students well. They plan activities that will motivate and engage them. For example the 'College Services' lessons offer practical learning situations including delivering the college post, restocking areas with day-to-day resources and collecting and recycling waste paper. The Enterprise lessons enable students to develop a range of work related skills in practical situations such as preparing a money float, setting up sales tables, sorting and wrapping flowers and serving customers. In these lessons communications, everyday

numeracy and literacy are well established. Good staff student ratios result in students being able to carry out wide range of diverse differentiated activities within each session.

65. In less successful sessions staff accept that students are inactive for considerable periods of time. At times students are unclear about what is expected of them, for example no explicit reason was given for a visit to a GFE college resulting in students having no specific aims and objectives for the visit. The students were bored: one student fell asleep and another became distressed. In other lessons there were no targets relating to prevocational skills. For example in a horticulture lesson students had no targets related to tool handling or safe techniques for digging. In another lesson students were following instructions, putting flowers into a basket with little understanding of the purpose of the activity. Many of the less than satisfactory lessons were taught by temporary and agency staff inexperienced in teaching students with learning difficulties and / or disabilities.

66. The area is well resourced in terms of accommodation and resources for practical activities. A well stocked transitions room contains a wide variety of information from local colleges and other providers. A range of age appropriate 'Just the Job' books is available on different occupational areas and teaching resources. There is access to on-line careers information via a dedicated computer. Good staff/student ratios in the majority of lessons meet students' needs. Good support is provided for students in placement: this is only withdrawn once students are confident and able to work independently. There are few opportunities for students where appropriate to develop the skills required for independent travel. Students usually use college transport for visits and placements rather than of the public transport systems.

67. A comprehensive baseline assessment is developed over the first term. This provides a good basis on which to measure how much students have learned since starting the college. Records demonstrate good progress over time for many students. Information in the records identifies what, when and how the students achieve. For example, one student's target was to speak appropriately to people unfamiliar to him/her. This target was achieved on several occasions indicating that the student was able to use the skill in a variety of situations. Other records clearly identify other dates when this was achieved and the contexts in which it was achieved. This identified that the student could transfer the skill into a variety of situations for example, with adult customers in a supermarket and young children in a fast food restaurant. Students' work experience diaries record a good picture of their activity over time but does not record skills developed. For example student diaries are largely made up of photographs and there is little detailed recording by teachers of the skills developed whilst on placement. These work experience placements are valued by students, parents and carers.

68. Effective work experience takes into consideration students' experiences before coming to Bridge College. These are linked to in-house work experience via the 'College Services' sessions which enable students to make informed decisions about their choice of external placement. This arrangement adds breadth to the curriculum as external placements include vocational areas which are not part of the Bridge curriculum. Tutors use their knowledge of the students' interests to plan activities that both motivate and engage them.

69. Support for personal issues is very good. Concerns and worries are discussed by personal tutors and other staff. Medical and physiotherapy needs are dealt with in a timely fashion by the college nurse and other specialist staff. Occupational therapists work in class with students to increase and develop their physical skills. Respect for the individual underpins interactions between staff and students resulting in effective promotion of independence.

70. College links operate with a number of public sector colleges geographically linked to students' home areas. Familiarisation visits are followed by more formal visits. This enables students to meet potential future tutors and find out about courses. Bridge college staff support students during these sessions. One-to-one support is provided to ensure that students can access the programme where required. These links allow students to make informed decisions about future placements. Students are encouraged to visit a range of after college placements. There are effective links with the Connexions service personal advisor to organise alternative placements such as supported employment. Stockport Connexions attend most transition reviews they also provide support for

students whose personal advisor cannot attend the meeting.

Leadership and management

71. Day to day leadership and management are satisfactory. However, there are weaknesses in quality assurance. The internal teaching and learning observation scheme does not reflect that seen by inspectors. The college scheme includes observations of agency and external staff, but these lessons are not graded and are not included in the college self-assessment figures. Students' achievement of qualifications is good. However this achievement is not centrally recorded, analysed or evaluated.

72. Some poor attention to health and safety issues were observed during some lessons. For example students were not taught safe digging techniques. The poor technique was captured for a number of students, in photographs in their files. In another example, information in a tutor's file clearly states what students require for effective learning but staff did not use this information during the lesson.

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