

# David Lewis College

## Inspection Report 14 - 17 May 2007

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## Background information

## Inspection judgements

### Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management

## Description of the provider

1. David Lewis College is an independent specialist college situated on a 40 acre site in rural Cheshire. It provides further education for learners aged 16-25 who have epilepsy, related neurological disability and learning, behavioural and communication difficulties as well as autism spectrum disorders. The college forms part of the David Lewis Centre, a specialist provider of services for people with epilepsy. The college makes use of the central range of services, including clinical and support services. A part-time speech and language therapist is based in the college. The college occupies a light, airy building on the David Lewis Centre site. There are seven college residential units on site. A recently opened Macclesfield house provides up to eight beds for more independent learners in the community.
2. Currently, there are 59 learners attending the college, of whom 51 are residential and 8 attend daily. Thirty one of these learners are wholly funded in total by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), 20 learners are part funded by the LSC and social services and 8 learners are part funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and by their local health boards and by social services. Three learners are of ethnic minority heritage, 7 are aged 16-19 and 52 are aged over 19. Learners are drawn predominantly from the North West and immediately adjacent regions.
3. The curriculum has three main strands. Currently, there are 10 learners in the independence/vocational strand, 38 learners in the core strand and 10 learners in the provision for learners with complex needs. The independence/vocational strand provides for learners assessed at entry level 2 or above. In conjunction with residential provision in the more independent houses, learners access vocational training external to college with support, as well as work experience opportunities, and appropriate national accreditation. Learners in the core strand, have a wide range of ability from upper pre-entry to entry level 1. They access a broadly based individualised curriculum designed to develop their independence, social and life skills, literacy, numeracy, communication and self advocacy. Their curriculum includes participation in performing and creative arts, sport and community access, as well as vocational tasters. The complex needs strand involves two groups of learners, one with complex development conditions, severe learning difficulties, communication and mobility problems. The second group includes learners with severe epilepsy, autism, communication and behavioural difficulties. Their curriculum is sensory based and aims to promote

independence through enhanced mobility, communication choice and self-advocacy, and appropriate behaviour intervention.

4. The mission of the college is to 'enable young people with complex epilepsy and/or related neurological disability to make the optimum transition to adult living in the wider community by recognising potential, promoting inclusion, developing skills for life, maximising individual capacity for independence, enhancing communication through a total communications approach'.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: grade 2
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Good: contributory grade2</i>

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

5. This is a good college. Achievements are good and are celebrated well. Learners make significant gains in confidence, social and life skills and behaviour management. Where appropriate, learners achieve a good range of national awards. Many learners make good progress in developing their communication skills and work-related skills.
6. Teaching and learning are good. The recording and assessment of progress and achievement (RARPA) is well embedded. Baseline assessment is thorough. Targets are used effectively in most lessons. The majority of learners use methods of communication that are appropriate and facilitate learning; this is less developed for those with complex communication needs. Opportunities to develop work skills are good. Behaviour management is very effective. Good use is made of a range of resources in music, art and ICT.
7. Social and educational inclusion and equality of opportunity are good. Equality and diversity are promoted effectively through the curriculum. An excellent range of external links and enrichment activities benefit all learners. Opportunities to promote the learner voice are good. The college is aware, that some aspects of the specialist resources for a minority of learners with complex needs are insufficiently developed. Comprehensive procedures are well established to promote the safety, wellbeing and protection of individual learners.
8. Advice, guidance and support for learners are good. Initial assessment is thorough and clearly identifies individual support requirements. The learner induction is effective. Medical and behavioural support for learners is very effective. Care and pastoral support in the residential houses is good. Learning support in the classroom is adequate overall; however, a minority of learning support workers have an inadequate understanding of the needs of learners in the complex strand. Tutorial arrangements are thorough. Specialist communication and sensory support for a minority of learners with complex needs is insufficient. Transition arrangements are good.
9. Leadership and management are good, with an effective focus on continuous improvement. Self-assessment is thorough and mostly accurate. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall but some aspects of the discrete provision for a minority of learners with complex difficulties are less effective. Communication among staff is good. Action planning is adequate

overall, although it needs greater coherence and strategic planning processes are underdeveloped. Governance is robust and the college provides good value for money.

### Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

10. The college's capacity to improve is good. The self-assessment report is thorough and detailed; a good range of data effectively informs developments and quality improvement plans are comprehensive. The lesson observation system is effective in improving the quality of teaching. The professional development programme is wide-ranging. Recent management appointments have strengthened the capacity to improve teaching further. Managers have a good track record in effecting improvement.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

11. The college has made good progress in resolving most of the key issues raised at the last inspection. Individual learning plans are more rigorous, analysis of a range of data now informs planning and the curriculum has been developed to better meet the range of learner needs. The outcomes of assessments inform learner programmes and target setting. The coherence of quality assurance systems is improved but continues to remain a focus for further development. The college is yet to effectively address the need for increased staff expertise for teaching learners with complex disabilities. Leadership and management have improved from satisfactory to good.

### Key strengths

- strong leadership from the principal, providing a clear vision and direction
- governance
- well embedded culture of continuous improvement
- very effective medical and behavioural support
- good transition arrangements
- very good range of external links
- good celebration of achievement
- good opportunities to develop a range of workplace skills.



## Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- the lack of understanding by some staff of the needs of learners with complex learning difficulties
- the insufficient specialist communication and sensory support for learners with complex needs
- the coherence of action planning
- the underdeveloped strategic planning processes.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: grade 2

12. Achievements are good with high standards of work across the curriculum. Learners make good gains in confidence, social and life skills. Many learners with challenging behaviours achieve significant gains in managing their conduct. Learners make good progress in their development of literacy and numeracy skills in performing and creative arts, and vocational programmes. Many learners make good progress in their communication skills. However, the approach to increasing the communication skills for learners with complex needs is not sufficiently developed.
13. Achievements are celebrated successfully across the college. A traffic light system helps learners to evaluate their achievement. Where appropriate, learners achieve a good range of national awards. During 2006/07, a range of 36 national awards, from pre-entry to entry level 3, have been achieved by learners. The processes for recording learners' achievements and progress are now improved. Where appropriate, learners further develop their skills by attending courses at local colleges. Targets are now adequate overall, with some good targets set by the speech and language therapist.
14. The practical nature of much of the curriculum increases learners' enjoyment, motivation and awareness of a safe and healthy lifestyle. Individual risk assessments are thorough and some learners develop good work-related skills in a wide range of work experience on site. Learners make a positive contribution to the college community by running an on-site café and snack bar which promote healthy eating choices.
15. Learner attendance and retention are satisfactory and monitoring of these is now adequate. Of the ten learners who left in 2005/06, all progressed to supported living with a range of daytime activities. One learner progressed to supported employment.

### Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

16. Teaching and learning are good, particularly on the core, independence and vocational programmes. A thorough initial assessment, including a speech and language assessment, clearly identifies individual support requirements. Baseline assessment is also thorough. There is a clear link between assessments and targets set in individual learning plans (ILPs). Target setting is now improved. The recording and assessment of

- progress and achievement (RARPA) framework is well embedded and continues to be developed. Lesson plans are detailed and objectives are appropriately based on individual learning plans; most include well integrated targets in literacy, numeracy and communication. The tracking and monitoring of learner progress is adequate, although the college recognises it requires further development.
17. In the more effective lessons, teachers use multimedia music and technology, such as a sound beam to engage learners successfully and promote good learning. In less effective lessons, there is insufficient specialist expertise which leads to some poor teaching for a minority of learners with complex needs. Most teachers understand the learners' needs well and use the detailed behaviour management guidance very effectively in lessons.
  18. Good opportunities are available for learners to develop their skills through a wide range of realistic working environments on the college site, including a café, learner snack bar, car wash/valeting service, on the estate, and in the college office. Where appropriate, learners access vocational tasters in local shops and attend courses at local colleges.
  19. Good use is made of a range of information and communication technology in the majority of lessons and in the computer base room. Specialist resources in music and art are used well. While learning support is adequate overall, some support staff from the residences do not have sufficient understanding of complex learning needs to provide effective support in the classroom. Communication strategies are well-matched to the needs of most learners. However, the college is aware that the use of strategies such as intensive interaction, objects of reference and alternative and augmentative communication devices, are underdeveloped.
  20. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners, and to social and educational inclusion, is good. The college has an excellent range of external links and enrichment activities, which benefit all learners and extends their community involvement. Such links include Manchester United football club, the Hallé orchestra, as well as local secondary, further and higher educational establishments. Equality and diversity are promoted effectively through the curriculum. Learners participate in a wide range of sporting opportunities. Good opportunities are available for learners to access onsite and external work experience. Organisation of the curriculum into the three strands has enabled the college to meet learners' needs more appropriately. The college is aware that some aspects of the specialist resources for a minority of learners

with complex needs, are insufficiently developed. Learners have good opportunities to voice their opinion through weekly house meetings. A community based house promotes independence in those learners for whom greater independence is appropriate. While the student handbook is comprehensive, the adapted format for learners with complex needs has too much pictorial content.

21. Advice, guidance and support for learners are good. The well organised pre-entry arrangements enable learners and parents to make an informed choice. The effective learner induction uses adapted materials and enables learners to settle into college quickly. Medical and behavioural support for learners is very effectively managed through the centre's multi-disciplinary team which meets weekly with college staff. Learning support in the classroom is adequate overall. However, a minority of learning support workers have an inadequate understanding of the needs of learners in the complex strand. Care and pastoral support arrangements on the residences are effective. Tutorial arrangements are thorough. Individual speech and language support sessions and some group communication sessions are well planned. However, the specialist communication and sensory support for learners with complex needs is insufficient. Transition arrangements are good. The links with the local Connexions service are effective and provide a highly individualised focus on life after college. Learners have adequate access to counselling and advocacy. Parent involvement in reviews and transition is good.

Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

*Contributory grade:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Good: grade 2*

22. Leadership and management are good. The principal, supported by governors, sets a clear direction for the college. There has been a determined drive by senior managers to bring about quality improvements and to develop the provision to meet the changing needs of learners. The college is aware that strategic planning processes require further development. Recent management appointments have contributed to improvements. The quality of teaching and learning is improving and most lessons observed in the core, vocational and independence strands of the curriculum, are good or better. Some aspects of the discrete provision for learners with complex difficulties are less effective. Communication among staff is good. The college mission is regularly reviewed and is well understood by all staff. Regular briefings and meetings keep staff teams well informed and generate a corporate ethos.

23. Self-assessment is good overall and informed by a detailed understanding of the college strengths and areas for further improvement. However, the college has overgraded some aspects of the provision. The teaching and learning observation programme is effective in driving up standards. The many quality improvement plans are adequately monitored but the various processes need greater coherence. A minority of quality improvement targets are too vague to enable effective monitoring. College policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and revised. Curriculum management is generally good; organisation of the curriculum provision into three main strands has helped it to better meet learner needs.
24. Management information systems have improved and there are clear plans for further improvement. A range of useful data is evaluated to inform improvement planning. The college actively seeks the views of its learners, parents and other stakeholders; thorough analysis of this data indicates that the college is held in high regard. The professional development programme is wide ranging but the college is aware of the need to prioritise strategic training requirements. While staff have appropriate professional qualifications, self-assessment has accurately identified the insufficient numbers of staff with specialist expertise to meet learners' complex needs.
25. Resources throughout the college are well managed. Specialist equipment and facilities have been improved and are mainly of a good standard. Most classrooms are equipped with relevant ICT facilities and provide a good learning environment. Both residential and college buildings have had recent investment to ensure that they are fit for purpose and an additional on-site building will be made available for college use next term. A good range of external links and collaborative arrangements benefit the learners and promote inclusion.
26. The equal opportunities policy is comprehensive and takes account of the recent legislation. The recent centre-wide focus on staff training in equality and diversity has given staff a good understanding of the relevant issues. There is no variation in the achievements of different groups of learners. The college is compliant with equality legislation. Effective measures are in place to ensure that the health and safety of learners are safeguarded. A single central vetting and recruitment record is regularly monitored and updated. However, governors are yet to receive training in safeguarding and there is no specific nominated governor to take overall responsibility for this area.

27. Governors have a good range of skills and expertise that they apply appropriately in discharging their duties and maintain a strong oversight of the college's performance and finances. The college provides good value for money.

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