

West Middlesex College

Inspection report

Provider reference	132038
Published date	February 2008

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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.

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); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement 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. West Middlesex College (WMC) is a specialist independent day college. It was established in 2000, by Autism Consultants Ltd, for learners over 18 with a high functioning autistic spectrum disorder. The college is located on an industrial estate in West London. The building is shared with social services funded learners and first received LSC funding in 2004. It had its first inspection in November 2006, where it was found inadequate. The college currently has six learners, all of whom are male and five of whom are white. All learners have asperger syndrome and two learners have dyslexia. No learners have complex needs or require personal care. All of the learners are in their final year of funding.
2. A key feature of the provision is the focus on supporting learners to become more aware of their interpersonal behaviour and how to manage it appropriately. The activities taught by the college include independent living skills, sport and fitness, citizenship, and relaxation. The college does not itself offer any externally accredited courses. Work placements and access to courses in other colleges have been introduced for all learners during the current term. The level of these external courses ranges from entry level to level 2 and learners mostly attend for a few hours a week. The learner on the level 2 course attends for two days a week.
3. The college mission is to 'guide adults with an autistic spectrum disorder to develop their academic, vocational and life skills, through a creative, stimulating and personalised educational programme, that promotes enhanced well-being and social inclusion'.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Inadequate: Grade 4
Capacity to improve	Inadequate: Grade 4
Achievement and standards	Inadequate: Grade 4
Quality of provision	Inadequate: Grade 4
Leadership and management	Inadequate: Grade 4
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Inadequate: Contributory grade 4</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Inadequate: Grade 4

4. The college remains inadequate and is not fulfilling its mission. Improvements to the provision have been introduced too late and are not consistently or effectively implemented. Learners make good gains in developing social skills, but the college has not ensured that learners are achieving their vocational and academic potential. The current learners achieved no accredited qualifications between 2005 and 2007, even though many are capable of achieving qualifications at level 1 or above. The college has not implemented a robust process for the monitoring of learning goals and objectives on non-accredited provision. The baseline has not been updated since 2005 and it is not possible to accurately measure the distance travelled by learners.
5. Teaching and learning remain inadequate. No lessons are good or better, some are inadequate and common weaknesses include a failure to plan for, and stretch, more able learners. Initial assessment outcomes in literacy and numeracy are not used effectively for identifying targets and the process for changing and re-setting targets on the individual learning plans remain unclear.
6. The college's response to social and educational inclusion is not adequate. The outcomes for learners do not match their abilities and the programme provided has not been sufficiently challenging. Learners' academic abilities have not been sufficiently considered in programme planning. Improvements have been made in enabling learners to access work experience and provision in mainstream, but the college has been slow to implement this. Literacy and numeracy skills are not well developed. The promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum is not satisfactory.
7. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Learners have good access to personal support and counselling and all receive speech and language therapy. Specialist dyslexia support is insufficient. The tutorial system is effective in providing pastoral support, but is less effective in monitoring progress effectively. Careers guidance is unsatisfactory.
8. Leadership and management are inadequate. The college has been very slow in implementing changes to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection and has had several changes of principal during the year to cover for maternity leave. Quality improvement arrangements are ineffective, equality and diversity are inadequate and the college has failed to implement its safeguarding policy. The staff are not adequately qualified and the college has not fulfilled all of the requirements in its contract for individual learners.

Capacity to improve

Inadequate: Grade 4

9. The college does not show adequate capacity to improve. Provision has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection. The quality assurance systems have not been developed sufficiently to monitor the effectiveness of the changes. Learners' achievement and standards and the quality of provision remain inadequate. Equality and diversity are inadequate and the safeguarding policy has not been adequately implemented. The most recent self-assessment process is consultative, but the report does not demonstrate sufficient understanding of the key issues. It fails to identify many of the areas for improvement found during the inspection and the grades are over optimistic.

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

10. The college has been ineffective in the steps taken to improve since the last inspection. The senior managers have changed several times during the past year and, although a detailed quality improvement plan has been developed, the many changes to the provision have only recently been implemented and have not had time to impact sufficiently. Areas identified as needing improvement still remain. Whilst financial management arrangements have improved, the college is not fulfilling the requirements of its contract with the LSC. Safeguarding arrangements were satisfactory at the last inspection but are now a key area for improvement.

Key strengths

- good personal and pastoral support for learners.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the lack of rigour in the monitoring of non-accredited provision
- the need to plan more effectively to meet the individual needs of learners
- the weak link between initial assessment and the development of literacy and numeracy skills
- the need to focus more effectively on the vocational and academic potential of learners in planning the curriculum
- the lack of specialist support for learners with dyslexia
- the ineffective quality improvement arrangements
- the failure to implement the safeguarding policy
- poor value for money.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Inadequate: Grade 4

11. Achievement and standards are inadequate. Learners make good progress in developing social skills and in managing their behaviour in social settings. Since the start of the academic year, learners have had greater access to the community and social settings in which to practise their social skills and independence skills in realistic settings.
12. The college does not adequately measure the progress made by learners on its non-accredited provision. It has not yet implemented the process for the recognition and recording of progress and achievement (RARPA), and does not have a system for monitoring the quality of the initial assessment, individual learning plans (ILPs) or the recording of achievement of goals. It is not possible to effectively measure the progress of learners, or the distance travelled since they started at the college in 2005. Numbers of learners are too small to make meaningful equalities comparisons between different types of learners.
13. Two learners are awaiting moderation of a gold award, but the achievement of accredited qualifications is unsatisfactory. None of the current learners achieved any externally accredited qualifications between 2005 and 2007. This is a significant weakness as all are capable of doing so. The development of potential is central to the college's mission. The college has recognised this, but no effective action was taken until the current term. All of the learners are in the first term of attendance at courses in mainstream colleges and, in one case, this is for two days a week. That learner is taking a level 2 BTEC course. One learner has already achieved a level 1 literacy qualification.
14. The college has been slow to develop work placements for its learners, who did not have the opportunity to experience meaningful work related activity between 2005 and 2007, despite the potential to benefit from it. Five learners now have some work related experience. Two learners also have internal placements, where they make sandwiches for other learners as part of an enterprise, and three learners are on external placements. One of these learners attends his day placement without a support worker present. The early signs are that learners are benefiting from this opportunity, but it is too soon to evaluate the impact on the learners' overall achievement.
15. The college is in the early stages of implementing its 'skills for life' programme. The progress of learners in literacy and numeracy is not adequately recorded and the opportunities to gain qualifications have been insufficient.
16. Punctuality and attendance have improved and are now satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Inadequate: Grade 4

17. Teaching and learning are inadequate. Most teaching is satisfactory but no lessons are good or better and some are inadequate. More able learners are not sufficiently challenged. A narrow range of teaching and learning methods and resources are used, with an over-reliance on discussion, dominated by the teacher. Opportunities are missed to structure and record key learning points for learners to refer to later. Accommodation is cramped and unsuitable, and one classroom acts as a thoroughfare, which interrupts lesson activities. Teaching resources are limited and underdeveloped and, apart from practical activities like information and communication technology (ICT) and cookery, there have been few examples of resources supporting and underpinning teaching and learning activities.
18. Planning is inconsistent. Some schemes of work provide little structure or context for learning as they are very brief generic summaries and provide no insight into any planned range of learning activities. Lesson plans are more detailed and record individual targets, but these are often too broad and imprecise to capture learning progress. Functional skills are recorded on lesson plans but these do not always match learning ability and targets are often general statements such as 'opportunity to address their writing or problem-solving skills'.
19. Teaching staff are insufficiently experienced or qualified. Not all teachers have a teaching qualification and, although individuals have completed a brief 'skills for life' awareness raising session, no member of staff has undertaken a specialist qualification in literacy and numeracy. No-one has experience or specialist training in supporting learners with dyslexia.
20. Baseline assessments were completed in 2005 and have not been up-dated. Initial and diagnostic assessments for literacy and numeracy were completed earlier in the year, but the individual analysis has not been used to plan appropriate programmes of study. Individual tasks and activities are not matched to identified levels of ability. A revised individual learning plan has been recently introduced. This is detailed but has yet to be fully understood and embedded. Teachers and support tutors record progress daily and weekly but there is still some confusion in relation to the achievement of targets and the setting of new ones.
21. The programmes do not meet the needs and interests of learners adequately. The staff continue to support learners well in developing strategies to manage aspects of their behaviour that are barriers to learning. All learners now attend courses in mainstream provision and five now have work placements. Learners have individual timetables and the LSC funded learners are now taught separately from the social service funded learners. These positive changes have only been implemented in the final stages of the learners' three year programme. The programme offered at West Middlesex College does not build sufficiently on the academic and vocational achievement of learners. They have not, for example been able to take accredited courses in subjects such as ICT, where most demonstrate

aptitude and interest. Sometimes individuals are required to carry out tasks that they have been able to do with ease for some time. The transition arrangements do not include a formally taught transition programme for learners. The enrichment programme is minimal and equality and diversity are not adequately promoted. Schemes of work and lesson plans make scant reference to equality and diversity, although aspects are touched on in the citizenship programme.

22. Support and guidance are satisfactory overall. Learners state that they feel well supported and know who to go to if they have any complaints. Teachers and support staff know the learners well and work with them effectively. This has led to improvements in interaction and behaviour in lessons. However, there are no behaviour plans or guidance for individual members of staff, some of whom are new. Access to counselling support is good and learners make good use of a withdrawal room. Risk assessments are satisfactory. The new tutorial system lacks clarity. Pastoral support is good, but the recording of academic progress is not yet consistently implemented. A speech and language therapist is now in place and learners receive social language support in individual and group settings. However, they have not had a full assessment of need. There is currently no access to specialist dyslexia support.
23. Transition plans are detailed and include clear actions and timeframes. The plans are not used systematically at transition review meetings so some important issues are not discussed or actioned. Connexions advisers attend the review meetings but careers advice is insufficient and most learners have little idea of the opportunities available to them when they leave college.

Leadership and management

Inadequate: Grade 4

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Inadequate: grade 4

24. Leadership and management are inadequate. The college has had several changes of principal since the last inspection. The principal is on maternity leave and the current interim principal is only contracted for two days a week. Directors, managers and staff are committed to the new arrangements and communication across the provision has improved, with directors more involved in the management of the college. A new advisory group and an equality and diversity advisory group have been established, both having met once. However, the college has been very slow in implementing changes to the provision and this has significantly disadvantaged learners.
25. Quality improvement is inadequate. The college has a revised quality improvement cycle, but it does not adequately focus on the learners' experience. The college has developed a formal system for the observation

of teaching and learning, but this has only been implemented very recently. The RARPA process has not been adequately implemented, although this is a requirement of the LSC contract. The college has an improvement plan which focuses on areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, but not all of these have been satisfactorily implemented. The formal partnership arrangements with other education providers are not yet in place, although agreed verbally. The self-assessment process has improved and now involves all staff, managers and directors but does not include the views of learners and parents or carers sufficiently. The report has not identified all areas for improvement that were found by inspectors and grading is over optimistic.

26. Equality and diversity are inadequate. The college has developed a wide range of equality and diversity policies and all staff and directors have updated their knowledge recently. An equality and diversity advisory group has had its first meeting and although they would welcome a learner member, none has so far joined the group. A disability access audit has been carried out this year and the action plan is being implemented. The college policies meet the requirements of recent equalities legislation. However, the college is not compliant with its statutory duties for safeguarding. New members of staff have not yet received training in relation to the protection of vulnerable adults (POVA) and other staff have not been adequately updated, although this is planned. The promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum is not yet sufficiently explicit.
27. The accommodation remains unsuitable and staff are not adequately qualified. Financial arrangements have improved since the last inspection with the development of a separate budget for LSC funded learners. However, the college has not met all of the requirements of its contracts for individual learners. The provision is inadequate and value for money is inadequate.