

Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy

Inspection report

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Contents

Background information	3
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement	6
Key strengths and areas for improvement	7
Main findings	8

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 students 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. The Fortune Centre of Riding therapy (FCRT) was founded in 1976. It is an Independent Specialist College (ISC) of Further Education (FE) for young people between the ages of 16 and 25 years old. It is based in the south of England in the New Forest on three rural sites. The current total number of students funded by the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) is 45:13 in the first year, 14 in the second year and 18 in the third year. Of the 45 students, eight are male and one is from a Caribbean background.
2. Students learn through their involvement with horses. They follow the three year residential Further Education through Horse Mastership (FETH) course

which is internally accredited. Students are taught life and social skills and equine skills. Literacy and numeracy are taught through the curriculum as a whole and with two individual sessions a week. Learners are able to take external qualifications in horse care up to national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2. Teaching and learning are through the motivating medium of the horse, and the acquisition of equine-based skills are then used to transfer learning to everyday life. FCRT staff work on all locations on a timetabled basis, covering the whole 24 hours alongside residential students.

3. The FCRT's mission is to enable horse-motivated people with special needs to relate more successfully to others and to develop greater independence and skills and have more control over their own lives.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Satisfactory: Contributory grade 3</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The provision is satisfactory. Learners demonstrate good standards in the development of social, equine and independence skills. They make good progress on the FETH course and satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy. However, rates of achievement on the NVQ level 1 and NVQ level 2 in horse care are low and no learners take external qualifications in literacy, numeracy or other vocational subjects. Most learners progress successfully to supported living environments, but last year too few entered a learning or work-related context on leaving.
5. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers encourage students to discuss their actions and to become reflective learners. Good use is made of the naturally occurring activities associated with horse care, riding and living in a residential setting. Teachers increasingly use information and communication technology (ICT) in their lessons. Initial assessment is thorough and learner reviews are effective. Horses are carefully chosen to match the requirements of individual students.
6. The college's response to social and educational inclusion is good. The college provides for students with a wide range of abilities and has successfully encouraged participation from male learners and staff in a traditionally female environment. The FETH course enables students to achieve and progress at all levels of ability. Opportunities to practise literacy and numeracy skills in realistic settings are good and the students have good opportunities for work experience in a range of settings.
7. Support and guidance are good. The college provides good opportunities for therapeutic intervention and its use of a physiotherapist with a hippotherapy (horse-based therapy) specialism is particularly effective. The students demonstrate at tutorials and reviews that they are aware of what they need to do to improve. Advice and guidance have improved with the development of a transition programme that is new this year.
8. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The director provides clear leadership and the students flourish in a setting where they can learn by looking after horses. The self-assessment report is largely accurate. The staffing structure has been strengthened and curriculum managers have clearer accountabilities. The college's management information system does not yet provide sufficiently accurate data for managers to monitor and evaluate performance, including equalities data. The quality improvement procedures need further development, particularly in relation to non-accredited provision. Financial management and value for money are satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. The college demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve. The self-assessment report is largely accurate in its judgements, although the evidence is not always robustly presented. The quality of the provision is good, but the college has yet to develop its management information systems (MIS) and quality assurance procedures so that achievement and standards can be more effectively evaluated. The quality improvement plan is effectively monitored. The college is developing its provision in response to the changing external environment and is in the early stages of developing an updated strategic plan. The college is now collecting data in response to the requirements of equalities legislation.

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

10. The college has taken satisfactory steps to improve its provision since the previous inspection and re-inspection. Many of the areas identified for improvement have been satisfactorily addressed, but the quality assurance procedures and the lack of opportunities for learners to gain external qualifications remain. One aspect of the curriculum, found unsatisfactory at the last inspection, has been re-inspected and found satisfactory.

Key strengths

- good development of social skills and confidence
- good teaching and learning
- very effective use of horses to motivate learners
- good support and guidance.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the insufficient rigour in the quality assurance of its non-accredited provision
- the insufficiently developed MIS to provide accurate management information
- the insufficient opportunity to access externally accredited courses.

Main Findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. Inspectors agree with the college's self-assessment that achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students demonstrate well the confidence they have developed to participate effectively in a range of social settings. They are encouraged to reflect on their progress and are able to talk about the gains they have made during their time at the centre. Students enjoy their work. The development of these skills is at the core of the college's mission and this achievement is good.
12. All students take the internally accredited FETH certificates. Students all achieve on this programme, which has awards at different levels, appropriate to the abilities and attainment levels of the students who are entered. This arrangement helps to build confidence. Most students progress through several levels. The college has yet to fully implement formal procedures to ensure the overall quality of the programme.
13. The development of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. Effective use is often made of the activities involved in horse care and riding, and in the residential settings, to reinforce these skills. Students make progress in meeting their goals. However, the goals are not always the most appropriate for the students and the recording does not always reflect the skills developed. No students have taken external awards in literacy and numeracy; some students are currently working towards external awards in ICT.
14. The college has not been sufficiently rigorous in analysing its data in relation to external awards and has not been able to make judgments about its performance year on year. The college collects equalities data but has not adequately analysed outcomes in relation to different groups of students. The rates of achievement in 2005/06 and 2006/07 on the NVQ 1 and NVQ 2 in horse care are low with only 50% of students achieving part qualifications.
15. The destinations of students are satisfactory. The percentage of students who progress to supported living is high and only two students returned home in 2007. This is good and in line with the college's mission. However, the percentage finding successful places in FE or in work-related activity is low. The college is aware that its transition arrangements need further development and the plans for the current cohort of leavers are well advanced with significantly more students finding possible educational or employment related outcomes.
16. Attendance and punctuality rates are good. Rates of retention are high, as expected in ISCs.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

17. Teaching and learning are good. The self-assessment report accurately identifies that students are actively involved in practical activities that enable them to develop increased levels of independence. During their programme students are given increased responsibility for planning menus, shopping and cooking for themselves so that by their third year they make significant gains in independence in these activities. Teachers make good use of equine studies to enable students to acknowledge and improve their own behaviour. In one lesson a learner, who had been reluctant to ask for help, felt sufficiently confident to ask for assistance in completing the task of adjusting the horse's stable rug appropriately. In most lessons students are encouraged to be reflective and talk openly about what they have done and why. Students respond well to teacher expectations when working with the horses, in the indoor arena or in the houses. Students work in groups and learn to follow the daily routine of a working yard including mucking out, feeding and grooming horses to an acceptable standard. ICT is routinely used in lessons and students are able to make a PowerPoint presentation at their progress reviews. Much literacy and numeracy is practised using the horses and yard work but students are not always sufficiently challenged. Occasionally the teachers' use of activities, or their language, does not acknowledge the students' adult status.
18. Initial assessment is detailed and rigorous and clearly identifies areas for learning. The recording of learning through the termly reports captures much of the students' progress. Some goals on individual learning plans are imprecise and others make recording of some learning outcomes difficult. For example, many literacy and numeracy skills do not relate to those acquired through working in the yard. Teaching and learning resources are good. Horses are carefully chosen to meet the differing requirements and skill level of students. Judgements made about strengths and areas for improvement in the teaching observation scheme are largely accurate.
19. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students is good; the college provides for students with a wide range of abilities. The core of the provision is the students' interest in horses. Building on this interest is extremely effective as a motivator for learning at all levels. The FETH course is very well developed and, together with the opportunities offered in the residences, provides a very good vehicle for learning. The course is flexible, with a clear progression route for students, and internal certification at three/four levels. However, very few students progress to horse-related employment and the college has been slow in offering accreditation in other subjects for those students who could benefit. Third year students plan their own residential and enrichment programmes and all learners are involved in the community, attending local sports and fitness centres and engaging in fund raising events. All students take a course in budget management which prepares them effectively for greater management of their finances. The centre has made good progress in developing work-experience placements. These are realistically chosen to reflect students' needs and preferences and are appropriately risk assessed.

All third year students and most second year students have some external work experience and students also have an option to work in the centre's kitchen or with the maintenance team.

20. Support and guidance are good. The college accurately judges its range of specialist therapy, medical provision and learner support to be good. Students can gain advice on a range of health topics, such as diet, sexual health and contraception. A part-time physiotherapist, who specialises in hippotherapy (horse based-therapy), devises individual exercises for students which can be practised on horseback. Behaviour management strategies are closely related to horse care. The induction programme is thorough. Teachers provide very effective individual support for students throughout the curriculum and during tutorials. Students understand the progress they are making and are effectively involved in reviewing their progress through regular tutorials. They have regular contact with Connexions advisers. The newly developed transition arrangements provide learners with information at a much earlier stage in their programme than had previously been the case. Students feel safe and have good access to additional welfare and benefits advice. There is good liaison with families.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Satisfactory: Contributory grade 3

21. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The director and trustees provide clear and energetic leadership to fulfil their mission. Good professional links have been developed with external stakeholders and the local community in response to national priorities and the changing external environment. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall with examples of good achievement, particularly in the development of equine, social and independence skills. However, further work is needed to ensure that achievement data is collected, robustly monitored and evaluated so that managers and trustees can measure performance more effectively. The college has recently developed a management information system and data is being systematically recorded. The system is not yet sufficiently rigorous to provide the management information that the managers need to monitor and evaluate the college's performance overall.
22. The college's quality improvement arrangements need further development. The quality improvement plan is clear and is regularly reviewed and monitored by the Quality and Standards Committee. The college is in the early stages of developing an updated strategic plan. The director encourages a culture of continuous improvement and in some areas, such as the development of a transition programme for third year students, it is beginning to have an impact. However, the college is aware that more work needs to be done to develop the quality improvement processes. The college does not have robust procedures to monitor the quality of its main programme which is non-accredited. The self-assessment report is largely

- accurate in its judgements, although the underpinning evidence is not always sufficiently specific or robust. The Connexions officer contributes to the report and views are sought from parents and workplacement providers.
23. The college has been strengthened by a revised staffing structure. The arrangements for curriculum management have improved with members of staff having clearer curriculum accountabilities. Improvements to the curriculum, such as closer links with a local FE college, and more work-experience opportunities, are already benefiting students. However, at present, although members of staff have supervision, they do not have a formal system for linking outcomes to any staff development or college priorities. The college is in the process of developing these links.
24. Equality of opportunity is satisfactorily promoted. The college has developed satisfactory policies in response to equalities legislation. It has been slow in implementing the requirement to monitor staff numbers and student achievement by different groups but has now started to do so. However, this data needs to be analysed more rigorously. The college has robust health and safety arrangements. The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) reports are good and the college complies with safeguarding legislation.
25. Staff are well and suitably qualified and the college is on target to have all staff appropriately qualified by 2010. Staff induction is good. Specialist resources and most of the accommodation are good. The college has scheduled improvement work for identified teaching areas and accommodation. Financial management is satisfactory. The college provides satisfactory value for money.