

# Regent College

Inspection report

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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. Regent is an independent specialist college (ISC) offering day provision for learners aged 16 to 25 years. Currently, there are 19 learners who are funded directly by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and one learner funded jointly by LSC, Educational and Learning Wales (ELWa), and social services. There is one learner of minority ethnic heritage. The college was established in 1999 by Shelton Care Ltd to meet the needs of learners who could not access mainstream further education. All young people attending the college have learning difficulties ranging from moderate to severe. The majority have complex needs, some have autistic spectrum disorders and two have physical disabilities.
2. The college operates from one building in Stoke-on-Trent. The college's new mission from March 2006 is 'developing independence in an adult world through communication, vocational, social and life skills'. The educational programme is aimed at developing learner skills through individual programmes, and uses a range of local facilities for community awareness, leisure, recreation and gardening. Vocational opportunities are being developed and learners undertake national awards where appropriate. The college does not have a board of governors but is overseen by the two directors of Shelton Care Ltd.
3. The college employs 26 staff (full-time equivalents), of whom seven are teaching staff. The principal has overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the college and direct line management of the curriculum, equality and diversity, student support and quality assurance managers. A formal arrangement exists with the local primary care trust for the provision of specialist speech and language therapy.

## 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	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Satisfactory: grade 3</i>

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. This is a satisfactory college. Learners' achievements and the quality of their work across the curriculum are satisfactory. Achievements are adequately recognised and celebrated. Opportunities to accredit achievement through national awards have improved since the last inspection. Most learners are successful in developing and extending their personal and social skills; those with more complex communication difficulties are learning to make choices through the effective use of pictures, symbols and signing. The college has yet to fully embed the principles of recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) in non-accredited learning.
5. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection, although there is too little teaching that is good or better. Teaching provides increased levels of challenge for most learners and an appropriate range of resources is used to support learning. The management of learning support workers has significantly improved and is now satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy are successfully embedded across most areas of the curriculum. Lesson planning is overly complex and evaluations do not adequately record small steps of learning. The quality of target setting has improved but remains inconsistent.
6. Programmes and activities to meet the needs of learners are satisfactory. The use of community facilities to extend learning opportunities is good. Changes to the curriculum since the last inspection mean learners have access to improved vocational opportunities. Work placements are now in place but they are not sufficiently tailored to individual needs. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Personal support is good. Review of learner progress is satisfactory. Plans to help learners make a successful transition from the college are not well developed. Social and educational inclusion are satisfactory.
7. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Directors and managers have improved accommodation and accessibility significantly. The parent company demonstrates a high level of commitment to improving learners' experiences. New quality systems and processes are in place which enable monitoring of progress, but it is too early to judge their impact on improving provision. The proportion of teachers with specialist teacher training qualifications is low. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

### Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. The college has a satisfactory capacity to improve its provision. Directors and managers work closely and have demonstrated that they can effect improvements rapidly. They have shown considerable commitment to improving the learning environment and learners' experiences. Although the self-

assessment report is insufficiently evaluative, its conclusions and judgements are mostly accurate. The new self-assessment process includes all staff and leads into a relevant quality improvement plan, against which actions can be monitored. Quality assurance systems are improving and relate well to a yearly cycle of actions and monitoring reviews, but it is too soon to determine their effectiveness.

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

9. The college has made satisfactory progress to address the areas for improvement noted at the last inspection. There has been some improvement in the recording and tracking of learners' progress, but it is too soon to judge the impact of this fully in terms of raising learners' achievements. The provision the college makes for literacy, numeracy and communication has improved significantly. These skills are now better integrated into learners' programmes and clear targets are included in their programmes. The links between assessment, individual learning plans (ILPs) and lesson plans have improved but are insufficiently clear. The parent company has increased its critical oversight of the college significantly. Directors are much more aware of and involved in operational matters and learners' progress. The new quality improvement procedures are more comprehensive and detailed but it is too soon to judge their impact fully on raising standards. Specialist teaching expertise and qualifications remain areas for improvement. The college now meets the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA).

#### Key strengths

- high quality learning environment
- good embedding of literacy and numeracy in lessons
- good personal support for learners
- extensive use of community facilities to extend learning opportunities
- high level of commitment and involvement by the parent company.

#### Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- the rigour of target setting for learners
- the quality of lesson planning
- the low proportion of teaching that is good or better
- the arrangements for transition planning
- the proportion of staff with specialist expertise.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. Achievement and the quality of learners' work across the curriculum are satisfactory. This judgement agrees with the college's self-assessment report. Initial assessment processes are adequate. Most learners develop and extend their personal and social skills; those with more complex communication difficulties learn to make choices through the satisfactory use of pictures, symbols and signing. Learners enjoy their work and are pleased to talk about their achievements.
11. Some learners are involved successfully in community projects, such as clearing a pond and making it safe for local children. Others achieve good results by working as volunteers at different community venues. This has increased learners' self-esteem and confidence. One learner has gone on to complete further volunteer work during the summer holidays and has got his own allotment.
12. Successes are adequately recognised and celebrated through good displays around the building and college events, such as the end of year awards ceremony. The rigour of target setting is improving but remains inconsistent. Although regularly reviewed, too many individual learning targets do not adequately relate back to the outcomes of baseline assessments and so it is not always possible to identify small steps of learning accurately. Achievements over time are not sufficiently used to inform future planning. The college has yet to fully embed the principles of Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA) in non-accredited learning. A database is being set up to improve the tracking of learners' progress but it was not sufficiently established at the time of inspection to make judgements about its effectiveness.
13. Some learners are working successfully towards national awards where it is appropriate to their individual need. One learner completed level 1 numeracy in 2006/07 and is now progressing onto level 2. Nine learners participated in the Millennium Volunteers and achieved the bronze award and all learners who were entered for a communications award were successful. In 2007/08, some learners are working towards vocational units in catering and horticulture. Attendance and punctuality are good.

### Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. The quality of provision is satisfactory and this agrees with the college's self-assessment report. The college accurately judged the quality of its teaching and learning to be satisfactory and acknowledged weaknesses which were also found by inspectors. Teachers are increasingly providing better levels of challenge for learners in lessons. The use of realistic learning environments, such as the recently established college restaurant, is extending the learners' experience. Healthy eating and the importance of safety are promoted well within most lessons. The management of learning support workers has



significantly improved over the past year and additional job responsibilities have been established in areas such as communication, work experience, travel training and Skills for Life. Whenever possible, learning support within classroom based activities has been reduced in order to better promote independence skills. Learners are increasingly using pictures as prompts rather than seeking verbal prompts from support workers.

15. Baseline assessments have been revised and are comprehensive, but the outcomes are not used consistently to inform ILPs and lesson planning. However, the use of ILPs has improved since the last inspection and the college is aware of the need for further sharing of good practice. The college has strengthened its teaching of literacy and numeracy and invested well in improved resources. Literacy and numeracy targets are more focused and well integrated into most lessons. The use of a range of teaching resources has improved.
16. Schemes of work are satisfactory but lesson planning is overly complex. Some teaching and support staff have yet to develop the skills necessary to ensure that the recording of small steps of learning is carried out effectively in lessons. Recording is not always sufficiently evaluative to inform what the individual needs to learn next. Inspectors agreed with the college that in the best lessons teachers support learning with a good range of resources and provide varied learning activities which effectively engage and motivate learners. In the less successful lessons, there is insufficient focus on practical activities which match learners' needs. Staff sometimes use language that is not always age appropriate or meaningful to the learners. The college recognises the key areas for further improvement in teaching and learning and actions are in place to address this.
17. Programmes and activities are satisfactory to meet the needs of learners. Since the last inspection, the college has reviewed the curriculum and introduced a number of changes. It is too early to evaluate their impact fully but learners now have more access to vocational experiences, literacy and numeracy are integrated in their programmes and travel training is part of the independent living skills curriculum. The college continues to make good use of the community to extend learner experiences. However, links with other educational providers are underdeveloped. Learners undertake work placements but this is not yet sufficiently tailored to individual needs. Pilot work is taking place this year to extend the range of national accreditation on offer to learners.
18. Enrichment activities are satisfactory. One afternoon a week is dedicated to enrichment, when learners enjoy activities such as dance and drama. At lunchtime, they have access to computers and Makaton communication sessions. A learner forum has been established, which successfully helps learners to express their views about the college. A communication strategy is in place to help learners with more complex needs access the curriculum, but the college is aware of the need for further staff training to underpin this. Personal, social and health issues are dealt with as they arise for individual

learners, but this work is not sufficiently promoted as part of the curriculum for all learners.

19. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. All learners have a personal tutor and key worker and there are weekly timetabled tutorials. Review of learner progress has improved since the last inspection but some aspects are still not sufficiently rigorous. Personal support for learners is good. The college provides a full-time nurse and there is effective liaison with external agencies to access specialist medical and psychological support where required. Learners also benefit from an external advocacy service. There are satisfactory links with parents. The behaviour management system is good. The quality of advice and information to learners in relation to courses and programmes is satisfactory. The learner handbook is available in a variety of formats to make it more accessible to learners. There are links with social services and Connexions but transition planning to help learners move on from college is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

*Contributory grade:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Satisfactory: grade 3*

20. Leadership and management are satisfactory and this agrees with the college's self-assessment report. Since the last inspection, managers have given much energy and time to improving operational systems and insufficient to strategic matters, collaboration with other providers and longer term planning. Directors and managers work together much more closely than at the time of the last inspection and have effected significant improvements in several areas. They are yet to address other areas fully.
21. Managers have developed a new quality assurance system which prioritises learners' needs. The self-assessment process includes all staff. Although the ensuing self-assessment report is over-descriptive, most of its judgements are accurate. It leads into a concise quality improvement plan containing targets which are reviewed every two months during case conferences. The new appraisal and associated supervision systems aim to improve communication and performance. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these quality initiatives.
22. Managers have improved the lesson observation system and observers give mostly accurate feedback to teachers and learning support workers. Areas for improvement link to appraisal and staff development. Senior managers moderate the written outcomes, but joint observations to standardise judgements do not take place. Teachers share good practice through team teaching and peer review. Although the proportion of inadequate lessons has decreased significantly in the last year, the proportion of good or better lessons is too low.

23. The parent company has improved its commitment to and involvement in the college through a clear desire to improve learners' experiences. A director chairs the increasingly effective quality and curriculum group, which includes relevant external advisers. This group monitors progress and challenges senior managers appropriately. Financial planning has improved and financial management is prudent. The college budget is separate from that of the parent company and is delegated to different departments based on termly reviews of learners' needs. Value for money is satisfactory.
24. Directors and managers have made major improvements to the learning environment, especially the high quality restaurant and kitchen facilities. They have improved significantly the access for people with restricted mobility. Although staff engage in much appropriate staff development, the proportion of teachers with advanced specialist teaching qualifications for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is insufficient.
25. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The college meets the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and Special Educational Needs and Disability 2002 Acts (SENDA) and safeguarding. Good equality and diversity action plans are in place, but managers have yet to monitor their impact fully. The proportion of staff and learners from black and minority ethnic backgrounds is below that of the local area and managers have made insufficient progress to remedy this imbalance. Staff focus well on equality and diversity issues in lesson plans and lesson observations. Managers analyse learners' progress and achievements by gender, ethnicity and disability and take relevant action.