

Doncaster College for the Deaf

Inspection report

Provider reference	131869
Published date	November 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.

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
- specialist provision in: information and communication technology and preparation for life and work.

Description of the provider

1. Doncaster College for the Deaf is a large independent specialist college (ISC), that provides residential and day further education for primarily deaf and hearing impaired learners and those with communication difficulties. At present, the college does not provide for learners who present extreme challenging behaviour. The college operates under the auspices of Doncaster Deaf Trust, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. The principal has responsibility for reporting to both the college's governing body and its board of trustees. The college is located on a 27 acre site on the outskirts of Doncaster. Funding is drawn from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), the Residential Training Unit (RTU) of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Local Education Authorities (LEA) and private tuition fees. Doncaster School for the Deaf, which provides specialist education for pupils aged 5-16 years, occupies the same site and functions separately.
2. The college recruits locally, nationally and internationally. At present the college accommodates students in its on-site residential lodges. Further student accommodation is secured within the local community. The college is committed to a total communication strategy. Specialist staff include a part-time speech and language therapist, an audiologist and a communication support team. The college mission is 'to develop high quality, innovative and collaborative provision in a financially efficient environment which empowers deaf and hearing impaired learners to live a productive and independent life'.
3. There are currently 169 learners, of whom 127 are funded by the LSC and 36 are funded through DWP (RTU). 105 learners are male and 38 are from minority ethnic backgrounds. College provision includes a range of areas: business studies, catering, information and communication technology (ICT), construction, creative arts, foundation, hairdressing, health and social studies, motor vehicle and sport. Nationally recognised pre-vocational, vocational and part-time adult training qualifications are offered from pre-entry level through to level 4. The foundation link and vocational access programme has increased in number to 23 learners. These learners have a hearing impairment or communication difficulty plus additional learning needs or disabilities.
4. All teaching staff have or are working towards teaching qualifications and level 2 in literacy and numeracy. Residential staff work towards qualifications at level 3 in promoting independence. Four members of staff are trained in behaviour management and advise other staff. Five staff are trained teachers of the deaf. All staff are required to train towards qualifications in British Sign Language (BSL) at level 2. BSL interpreters are used, as needed, in lessons for higher level work or where the teaching staff signing is weak.

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: Grade 2</i>

Sector subject areas

Information and communication technology	Good: Grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. This is a good college. Learners' achievements are good overall and standards of work are high. Monitoring of attendance and punctuality is good. Learners make significant gains in self-confidence, communication skills and in managing their behaviour. Opportunities for learners to develop work-related skills are very good. Recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning (RARPA) has yet to be fully implemented.
6. Teaching is good and improving. Assessment practices are rigorous overall. There is increasing use of ICT to support learning. Staff form very good relationships with the learners. Deaf staff provide excellent role models. There is good use of a very wide range of specialist resources and realistic learning environments. The college is aware of the need to improve the rigour of lesson observations. The evaluation of learning at the end of lessons and the embedding of basic numeracy skills are underdeveloped.
7. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The curriculum is rich and varied and provides clear progression routes. The use of realistic contexts for learning is particularly effective. Significant success has been achieved in supporting learners to gain employment. An excellent range of enrichment activities is available. Social and educational inclusion is good. There is a strong commitment to equality and diversity; staff are trained in its promotion and the college is compliant with equalities legislation.
8. Advice, guidance and support are good. Pastoral support is particularly effective. Induction effectively enables learners to settle into college. A detailed initial assessment identifies learners' specific support requirements. Communication support for learners is effective through a well developed total communication approach. Behaviour management support is good. Medical support for learners is good. A comprehensive range of specialist external links benefits learners. Learners have good access to careers information. Transition arrangements are well established, however, action planning for transition is underdeveloped.
9. Leadership and management are good. The effective management style is open and consultative. The arrangements for quality assurance are good; the annual quality assurance cycle provides a clear and systematic framework for quality monitoring. The self-assessment process is good overall but the report is overly descriptive. Management of the curriculum is good. The promotion of equal opportunities is given a high priority particularly when linked to hearing impairment. The college provides good value for money.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college has a good capacity to improve. The management of change is effective and well supported by staff. Accommodation and facilities have improved, with clear plans for further development. Significant developments in quality assurance have supported a more consistent cross college approach to continuous improvement. The self-assessment report is largely accurate. The integration of the different aspects of the management information system to improve data capture, retrieval and dissemination is a key area for development.

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

11. The college has made good progress to address the key areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The consistency of the quality processes has improved significantly. Target setting has improved the focus on individual learner needs. Learners' achievements remain good and have continued to improve since the last inspection. Embedding of literacy is good in most vocational areas. New and refurbished accommodation and facilities have significantly enhanced the curriculum. Operational management has improved. The college is aware of the need to develop management information systems to enhance the monitoring of the college's performance.

Key strengths

- good achievements and a high standard of learners' work
- much good teaching
- wide range of realistic working environments
- outstanding range of enrichment activities
- high quality total communication approach
- a well established culture of continuous improvement.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the application of RARPA processes
- the further embedding of numeracy skills
- the further development of the management information system.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

12. Learners' achievements are good overall; they enjoy their time in college and take pride in their work. Standards of work across the curriculum are high. Learners make significant gains in confidence and communication skills and in managing their behaviour. In the residences, learners make significant progress in developing their independent living skills, supported by clear and measurable targets. Opportunities for learners to develop work-related skills are very good. Achievements are successfully recognised and celebrated within the college. The progress of most students is adequately monitored and communication with parents or carers is very effective. Recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning (RARPA) is being developed but has yet to be fully implemented across all areas. The college identifies this issue in their self-assessment report.
13. Achievement of qualifications is good in most vocational areas and the majority of learners work towards one or more nationally recognised qualification. Pass rates in nationally recognised qualifications are good and have improved overall from 83% in 2005/06 to 92% in 2006/07. For LSC-funded learners, pass rates have improved from 85% in 2005/06 to 93% in 2006/07. For learners funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the pass rate increased from 86% in 2005/06 to 89% in 2006/07. There are 67% of learners funded by the DWP who completed their programme and progressed into employment, training or further or higher education. Retention rates are high, in line with other specialist colleges. Attendance and punctuality are managed effectively.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

14. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and has continued to improve since the last inspection. Self-assessment processes are used effectively to identify areas for improvement. However, records of the college's lesson observations lack rigour. Initial assessment to identify support and specific learning needs is comprehensive and timely, and the outcomes inform the individual learning plans. Lesson planning is satisfactory overall and includes a good range of activities which take account of the learning needs. The evaluation of learning at the end of lessons is underdeveloped. Assessment practices are comprehensive and rigorous and outcomes adequately inform learners' individual learning programmes. Arrangements for the integrated development of basic literacy and numeracy are good in some areas, such as sports, but this is not consistently applied across all areas.
15. Staff expertise is good; all teaching and residential staff work towards qualifications in BSL at level 2. Staff learner relationships are very good and characterised by mutual respect and dignity. The deaf staff group provide excellent role models for the learners. Teachers mark work in a timely

manner: feedback to learners is prompt with clear guidance provided about how to improve. Information and communication technology (ICT) is increasingly used as a part of teaching and for independent learning in the college. Learners are encouraged to analyse and evaluate the quality of their own work and that of their peers.

16. Specialist resources are outstanding. Learners have good access to support, such as BSL as an additional language, and audiology. Significant efforts are made to develop specialist and technical BSL vocabulary and resources, such as video dictionaries. The college now makes appropriate use of assistive technology, such as minicomms, mobile phones, MSN, email and flashing fire alarms. Resources and facilities for vocational education are very good. Learning takes place in realistic work contexts on-site for construction, motor vehicle and hair and beauty.
17. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The curriculum provides very clear progression routes through an extensive variety and levels of vocational courses. Making healthy food choices is very well promoted in the canteen and in the residences. The very effective total communication approach matches the learning requirements of the client group well. The use of realistic contexts for learning is particularly effective and detailed individual risk assessments actively support the promotion of good health and safety practices. Opportunities to participate in external work placements are very good; many placements are arranged in the learners' home area. As identified in the self-assessment report, the college has particular success in supporting learners to gain employment.
18. An excellent range of enrichment activities is available which the college accurately identified in their self-assessment report. Participation in sport is actively promoted. Learners are successfully encouraged to participate in community activities, make use of local sporting and leisure facilities, and the many activities which take place on-site. The college's sports academy is in partnership with the local general further education (GFE) college and provides fully integrated coaching sessions and fixtures against other colleges in the Yorkshire area. Deaf learners also work alongside hearing learners from the local GFE college on programmes in catering. Learners are able to contribute positively to the local community for example through Millennium Volunteers, Junior Sports Leaders Award and teaching members of the public to sign. The college is involved in an innovative multi-national European project for people with hearing impairments and communication difficulties.
19. Social and educational inclusion at the college is good; there is a strong commitment to equality and diversity. Staff are trained in its promotion and the college is compliant with equalities legislation. There are suitable arrangements to meet the religious needs of its learners. Learners' views are well represented in self-assessment procedures, on some committees and through the learner council. The governing body holds termly learner listening meetings; any resultant findings and actions are carefully explained

to learners. The representation of learners and staff from black and minority ethnic backgrounds is very good. Comprehensive procedures are in place to promote the safety, well being and protection of individual learners. An understanding of a healthy lifestyle is very well promoted throughout the curriculum.

20. Advice, guidance and support for learners are good. Good use is made of the self-assessment process to monitor and improve guidance and support. Pastoral support is highly effective. The support for learners to manage their own behaviour is good. Comprehensive pre-entry information and guidance helps learners to make an informed choice. A well planned induction enables learners to settle into college quickly. The detailed initial assessment including specialist assessments clearly identifies individual support needs. Communication support for learners is highly effective through a well developed total communication approach. This includes a part-time speech and language therapist, an audiologist and a well qualified communication support team. Medical support is very effectively managed through the college's nurse who liaises closely with a local doctor. Access to a good range of external specialist links includes specialist counsellors, anger management support and sexual health services. Learners have good access to careers information. Job preparation workshops are provided for learners. Transition arrangements are well established across the college. However, transition action plans are insufficiently developed.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Good: Grade 2

21. Leadership and management are good, which the college accurately identified in the self-assessment report. The 2006/2009 strategic plan is comprehensive and identifies key priorities for the college. However, the monitoring of the associated quality improvement plan lacks rigour. Responsibility for monitoring the completion of key actions is not identified. Key weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been resolved and the required change has been managed well. The open management style of senior managers is valued by staff and morale is good.
22. Quality assurance arrangements are good. The annual quality assurance cycle provides a clear and systematic framework for quality monitoring across the college. Staff speak with enthusiasm of the benefits of a systematic and rigorous approach to the collection of evidence, to support the development of a self-critical culture. However, records of senior management team meetings are insufficiently detailed and do not form a basis for the audit of key actions.
23. The self-assessment process is good overall and reflects the judgements made by inspectors. However, the large amount of detail prevents the report being a useful working document. A satisfactory lesson observation process has improved teaching and learning. However, written feedback is overly focused on teaching with insufficient focus on learning and attainment. Risk

assessment is adequate and related documentation is being further developed.

24. Management of the curriculum is good. All teachers have appropriate teaching qualifications and staff are well deployed. Staff value the training opportunities available to them. The annual appraisal process is not sufficiently adequate to meet the needs of a minority of staff. Learners are encouraged to contribute to the decision making process in college through student forums, representation on college wide committees such as health and safety, and equal opportunities and diversity. Learners and their parents are actively encouraged to give regular comments via perception surveys. External links are strong and benefit the learners.
25. The promotion of equal opportunities is good. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is significantly higher than the local population. Equality and diversity is given a high priority. The college meets the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002. The Disability Equality Duty Statement is well established in the college. The arrangements for safeguarding learners are comprehensive and learners feel safe.
26. Financial planning and management are good. Governors and trustees are highly committed, well informed and monitor the college's performance effectively. Significant improvements have been made to the fabric of the campus. The college recognises that the management information system requires further development. The college provides good value for money.

Sector subjects area

Information and communication technology

Good: Grade 2

Context

27. The college offers courses in computer aided design (CAD), computer hardware, and using information and communication technology (ICT) from entry level to level 3, to 100 learners. Of these, 12 attend full-time courses in design and technology, 25 attend full-time courses in business studies and the rest attend as part-time learners from subject areas across the college.

Strengths

- high success rates
- good use of resources which support teaching and learning
- wide range of provision
- good support for learners
- effective management.

Areas for improvement

- insufficient variety in teaching and learning
- low employment outcomes in design and technology.

Achievement and standards

28. Achievement and standards are very high which the college accurately identified in the self-assessment report. In design and technology at levels 2 and 3, retention and pass rates were 100% in 2006/07. In business studies ICT courses, retention rates were 87.5%, while retention rates in design and technology rose by 20% to 94% in the same period. Pass rates were 100% in business studies ICT short courses in the same period.
29. Learners develop good vocational and ICT skills. They work purposefully in lessons and produce work of a high standard. Business studies learners develop very good portfolios of ICT evidence. Design and technology learners use CAD software successfully to create sophisticated models and designs.

Quality of provision

30. The ICT provision is good. Teaching and learning are good and lessons are well planned. In the better lessons, teachers use a variety of activities to engage learners. In a group studying health and safety learners researched problems, discussed solutions together, measured and photographed evidence for their portfolios and reported back to the teacher. Learners benefit from a highly professional environment. It is particularly impressive in the business administration office. As identified in the self-assessment

report, learners use good quality software, study materials and self-study packages effectively. However, some learners spend a very long time working alone on computers without any change of learning activity. Teachers are well qualified and have good access to a range of staff development. Assessment processes are thorough and well implemented. Learners' progress is reviewed regularly and tutors provide helpful advice and direction. Learners have useful individual learning and action plans; although some targets are insufficiently precise.

31. The college meets the needs and interests of learners very well. The wide range of ICT provision enables learners to start programmes at different times throughout the year and progress through different levels on all courses. ICT courses help learners from other college areas to extend their vocational skills and improve their employment prospects. Design and technology learners develop good vocational skills. Employment outcomes for learners on CAD and computer hardware courses are low; the course team is developing strategies to improve links with employers.
32. Support for learners is good. Learners have good access to specialised learning support. Relationships between teachers and learners are very good and based on mutual respect. Learners comment favourably on the support provided by teachers.

Leadership and management

33. Leadership and management are good. Managers set priorities and work well with colleagues, morale is high, and teams strive to achieve and maintain high standards. Quality assurance is thorough but systematic sharing of good practice from lesson observations is insufficiently developed. The self-assessment reports are largely accurate. Equality and diversity are promoted well through the vocational and wider curriculum, and the use of adaptive technology.

Preparation for life and work

Context

Good: Grade 2

34. The college offers two full-time foundation programmes: the Link and Vocational Access programmes. There are 12 learners on each programme. Learners on the Vocational Access programme undertake vocational tasters throughout the college and integrated literacy and numeracy provision. The Link programme focuses on the development of life skills as well as basic literacy and numeracy skills. Learner's achievements from these programmes are validated by a range of external bodies.

Strengths

- good achievement of communication and work related skills
- much good teaching
- good provision and effective use of realistic work environments
- good support for learners.

Areas for improvement

- insufficient recording of small steps of learning
- the development of learners' numeracy skills.

Achievement and standards

35. Achievement and standards are good. Baseline assessments are detailed and are used effectively to establish individual programmes. Learners enjoy their studies and respond positively to staff. All learners are proud of their achievements and display good standards of work. Learners work well at their own pace and gain confidence and improve their self esteem. They made significant progress in the development of communication and work related skills, as well as the management of their own behaviour.

Quality of provision

36. The foundation provision is good overall. Much of the teaching and learning is good. In the better lessons, the teaching is varied and engages and stimulates the learners. Imaginative use of the interactive whiteboards supports learners' interest and motivation. Learners benefit from being able to access a wide variety of vocational taster sessions. Teachers take positive steps to actively reinforce links between activities in different lessons. However, the planning for embedding of numeracy skills in lessons is insufficiently developed. The RARPA framework is not sufficiently developed to record small incremental steps of learning. The foundation department identified this as a strength in its self-assessment.
37. The college meets the needs and interests of learners very well. The enrichment programme is outstanding. A wide variety of vocational tasters and activities meet learners' needs highly effectively through their individual

learning programmes. High quality realistic work environments motivate and challenge the learners to experience new activities and develop their confidence. Comprehensive individual risk assessments actively support the promotion of good health and safety practices. The development of a healthy lifestyle is given a high priority. The differentiated teaching and learning resources are of high quality and effectively meet individual needs.

38. Guidance and support for learners are good. Educational and residential staff know their learners well and there is an ethos of trust and mutual respect. Access to a wide range of specialist support and therapies is good. Transition supports learners to move successfully to life beyond the college. A transition toolkit is in the early stages of development.

Leadership and management

39. Leadership and management are good. Staff appreciate the high level of support from their line managers. The appraisal process is well embedded and leads to the clear identification of relevant training to improve staff skills. All staff make a positive contribution to the programme area self-assessment report; inspectors agreed with the weaknesses but judged some strengths and the overall grade to be overstated. Although the teaching and learning observations are well established the feedback is insufficiently detailed, particularly in relation to learning and attainment. Regular meetings support good communications. Teachers take positive steps to actively promote equality and diversity in the curriculum.