

The Orpheus Centre

Inspection Report 5-8 June 2007

Audience Post-sixteen	Published July 2007	Provider reference 50041
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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 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. The Orpheus Centre is a small specialist independent college with extensive grounds, based in open countryside just outside of the town of Godstone in Surrey. It opened in May 1999 with five learners. The centre now offers 25 residential places. It describes itself on its web-site as a 'performing arts centre that provides opportunities for personal development through the performing arts and other learning experiences for young disabled adults with a physical impairment and/or learning need; so that they can make informed choices about the future and gain the skills to live more independently in the community'. All young people attending the centre are aged over 19 years and are referred to as 'apprentices'.
2. Orpheus had its first intake of apprentices funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in September 2003. Eight apprentices are funded by the LSC. Of the eight LSC-funded apprentices, two are male. There are no LSC funded apprentices of minority ethnic heritage.
3. The centre offers performing arts, life skills and literacy, numeracy and communication training. It has a library, teaching and common rooms, studios, a theatre, residential accommodation within the centre, and self-contained flats within the grounds.

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
Equality of opportunity	Satisfactory: contributory grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Inadequate: grade 4

4. New arrangements are in place to record progress, but the college has not yet implemented sufficiently robust measures to demonstrate learners' achievements over time. It is not possible to fully evaluate the standards of work achieved by learners, particularly in the performing arts.
5. Although there are examples of good practice with creative ideas, teaching and learning overall are inadequate. There are significant weaknesses, ranging from lack of basic teaching skills to the failure to meet the support needs of learners effectively. Initial assessments do not always result in appropriate placements of learners on programme levels or to individual modules.
6. The curriculum is still in the process of development. The three strands of the curriculum are not well integrated. The criteria for studying at different levels are not clearly defined.
7. The centre's approach to social and educational inclusion is unsatisfactory. Not all learners are on programmes that are sufficiently challenging or appropriate, and the specialist support and resources used in lessons are not always adequate. The centre has not been sufficiently active in its marketing of the provision in order to recruit communities under-represented in its provision.
8. Personal support for learners continues to be good, and tutors and key workers work well together. Arrangements with the Connexions service are satisfactory. Specialist interventions from qualified therapists have improved, but the outcomes of the assessments are not always well used in the teaching programme.
9. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The college's quality assurance processes are not used effectively and self-assessment judgements are unrealistic. Despite strong leadership in supporting and caring for learners, their educational potential is not fully realised by the ways in which the college pursues its stated purpose.

Capacity to improve

Inadequate: grade 4

10. The college's capacity to improve is unsatisfactory. The quality assurance systems that have been developed and implemented do not lead to

improvements in the quality of provision. Learners' achievement and standards, teaching and learning and the curriculum are all unsatisfactory. The college has a limited understanding of its own strengths and areas for improvement, and key weaknesses identified at the last inspection remain. Members of staff and governors were involved in the self-assessment process, but the report has been over-optimistic in its assessment of progress made since the previous inspection.

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

11. The college has been ineffective in the steps it has taken to improve since the last inspection. Despite the introduction of a range of systems and processes designed to capture and measure the quality of provision and its overall level of performance, the college has not improved the learning experience of the learners since the last inspection. It has just started to monitor the effectiveness of its procedures during the key stages of learners' progress and achievement. The teacher observation scheme has not identified the significance of weaknesses in meeting learners' needs.

Key strengths

- good learning environment
- good personal and pastoral support for learners.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the weaknesses in the recording of learners' progress
- the unsatisfactory aspects of teaching and learning
- the lack of rigour in the initial assessment process
- the lack of coherence in the curriculum design
- the insufficient use of specialist teaching strategies to overcome barriers to learning
- the failure of the quality assurance system to monitor the effectiveness of the provision.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Inadequate: grade 4

12. Achievement and standards are inadequate. This weakness was not identified in the college's self-assessment report. Since the last inspection, the centre has developed satisfactory arrangements to track learners' progress. These follow the stages of the learning process from pre-course assessment to final review. However, they are not yet used effectively by all staff. Learners follow programmes of two or three years and it was not possible to track the progress made from the start of the programme. Learners generally meet their individual targets, but these are often too general to be meaningful and are not always sufficiently challenging. Half-termly progress in relation to life skills and literacy and numeracy is beginning to be recorded effectively, but in performing arts this is often poorly captured, with insufficient emphasis on the standard of work or the skills developed. Learners are not effectively involved in the evaluation of their own performance. Videos are made of performances, but they do not show what progress has been made by individuals. The centre is beginning to develop video diaries as evidence of learners' progress.
13. A work experience coordinator has recently been appointed and is beginning to make contacts and plan placements. One learner has an external placement and one an internal placement. Learners are involved in the planning of external performances and the college is developing ways of using this experience as part of the formal work-related curriculum. This aspect of the curriculum has yet to be fully developed.
14. Destinations of leavers are satisfactory. Of the three learners who have left the centre in the last three years, two have returned home and one has a supported living tenancy. All three continue to attend further education courses on a full- or part-time basis.
15. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and the college has introduced measures to improve punctuality of learners. However, during the week of inspection, the lateness of learners disrupted several classes.

Quality of provision

Inadequate: grade 4

16. Teaching and learning are not satisfactory. Inspectors found key weaknesses, both in general teaching skills and in the development of strategies that enable individual learning. In many lessons, the specific needs of one or more learners were not adequately met because the

learning needs of individuals in the group were not fully understood. The pace of instruction was sometimes too fast, with insufficient illustration, and tutors did not always check learners' understanding. Teaching techniques were too narrow, with too many closed questions, and the most able learners were not sufficiently challenged. Support staff sometimes answered on behalf of learners and in larger, mixed group teaching, more able learners were allowed to dominate. In a few classes, there were too few support staff. The college's self-assessment report failed to identify these weaknesses in teaching and learning. In the more successful lessons, tutors used creative ideas and provided clear demonstrations. Support staff understood what was required of them. Satisfactory use was made of information and communication technology. Literacy and numeracy skills were blended well with independent living skills and used in practical contexts.

17. Target setting is inconsistent and can be too generic, with targets such as 'complete your assignment'. These targets do not sufficiently explain which aspect of skill development the learners are aiming to achieve, and do not have measurable criteria. The documentation for target setting and review varies between tutors and not all is effective.
18. Assessments do not include sufficient input from the learning team. Learners have been wrongly placed on courses, and one learner has been accepted below the level at which courses are offered by the college. Pre-course and initial assessments do not always result in placements into levels or modules. Feedback during lessons is generally positive and encouraging, but does not offer sufficient critical advice to learners. There are too few opportunities in performing arts lessons for learners to discuss their performance and evaluate their own work and that of others. The assessment of learners' achievement is too reliant on tick boxes and checklists and does not focus sufficiently on the development of skills over time.
19. Learning environments are good. There are well equipped performing arts spaces and workshop rooms. A good multimedia and music technology suite is available for learners. Learners can access music practice rooms outside lesson times. Tutors from creative backgrounds bring subject knowledge but not arts education or disability arts expertise. Teaching resources are not always the most appropriate for learners.
20. The educational curriculum is still in the process of development, and does not fully meet the needs and interests of all learners. The centre publicity states that that Orpheus is a performing arts centre and that the performing arts are used as a vehicle for developing independence, but

there are too few opportunities to work in this way. Improvements have been made to the literacy and numeracy and life skills strands of the provision, and the early indications are that these aspects of the work are effectively planned. The centre's programme is currently offered at two levels, foundation and advanced. These are not adequately differentiated and it is not clear what skills are required at the different levels. It is not possible to track learners' progress in developing skills and moving from one level to another. Some learners are repeating work done in earlier years and others are working on modules that are at levels lower than those they had achieved at entry. The opportunities for subject specialism continue to be limited, and the schemes of work do not promote diversity. The centre supports learners to take external qualifications where appropriate. No apprentice is currently studying with other local providers. Greater involvement with local colleges is being developed.

21. The enrichment programme is satisfactory. Learners have good opportunities to further develop their skills in clubs on site, and also by performing at local festivals and events. There are fewer opportunities on a weekly basis for leisure activities off site.
22. The centre continues to provide good personal and pastoral support for learners. This strength has been maintained since the last inspection. Key workers and personal tutors work well together, and there are effective mechanisms for sharing pastoral information on a day-to-day basis about learners.
23. The provision for specialist interventions from therapists has improved and now includes initial assessments. However, the outcomes of the assessments are not always well used. Teaching and learning support staff do not always put into practice the strategies identified, and learners sometimes continue their dependence on support workers for too long. The level of understanding about the needs of learners with complex communication needs remains too low. Learners have satisfactory support plans. They do not have behaviour plans, but these are planned for the near future.
24. The provision for careers advice and guidance has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The Connexions service is involved with learners at each stage of their programme. They now assist learners with the preparation for transition from the centre. Learners' key workers play a significant role in assisting learners to find appropriate accommodation on leaving the centre.

25. The arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. The learners are involved in developing their own risk assessments. However, not all individual risk assessments have been upgraded to a good standard.

Leadership and management

Inadequate: grade 4

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Satisfactory: grade 3

26. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The community of the college is strongly led in supporting and caring for learners, but the educational focus of the college's work is not given sufficient strategic prominence. The curriculum is still in the process of being developed and the college recognises that it lacks a senior manager with the expertise in disability and performing arts to create an integrated curriculum. Mechanisms whereby learners' educational progress may be monitored and measured have been slow to develop and are not yet fully effective.
27. Quality assurance has not identified the weaknesses in many operational aspects of the college's work. A number of new procedures have been developed. They are followed consistently, but are not used rigorously to bring about improvements. The Recognition and Recording of Progress and Achievement (RARPA) is in the early stages of development. Individual aspects of the learning process are not monitored sufficiently to identify areas for improvement. The lesson observation scheme does not give sufficient weight to identified weaknesses. The views of learners are sought and listened to and learners feel engaged in the running of the college. Despite this, there is significant frustration and disappointment amongst learners about several aspects of their educational experience. The college's self-assessment process is evaluative and systematic, but the report underestimates the extent and impact of many weaknesses. Almost all of its graded judgements were higher than those given by inspectors.
28. Channels of communications between the different staff teams are good, but these opportunities are not always used to best advantage; information about learners and their needs is exchanged but is not consistently acted upon. Links continue to be made with a wide variety of external organisations and agencies, and community links are strong; however, strategic partnerships with disability arts groups are underdeveloped.
29. Staff are dedicated and enthusiastic but too few teachers are adequately qualified to teach and few have specialist qualifications. Too many teachers lack adequate knowledge of the specific support needs of learners. The

college values staff development highly and invests significantly in it. However, not enough has been done to focus on areas that help teachers to improve their practice.

30. The college is compliant with equality legislation and safeguarding. A diversity and equality group is now established and oversees the implementation of all policies. However, the college does little to promote race equality. Training of staff and trustees on their statutory duties and responsibilities under the acts has been completed. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Explicit promotion of diversity through the curriculum is underdeveloped.
31. Governance is carried out by the board of trustees and is satisfactory. The board has developed a strong committee structure which makes efficient use of the good range of trustees' skills. Trustees are more directly involved in quality assurance processes, but their capacity to hold the college to account for its performance is hampered by the lack of quantifiable measures of learners' progress.
32. Learning resources, including information and communication technology, specialist equipment and accommodation, are good. Financial management is satisfactory overall. However, the college is currently unable to account accurately for its expenditure against its two different main sources of public funding. The provision is not satisfactory and the college provides unsatisfactory value for money.