

# Orchard Hill

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 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. Orchard Hill College is a day independent specialist college that provides full- and part-time education for young adults, aged 16 and over, with profound and complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college is based in the old town hall building in Wallington in the London Borough of Sutton. In addition to this site, the college has developed a range of external satellite sites to enable more learners to access the college's provision in their local home area.
2. The college currently has 163 learners. One hundred and fifty learners are funded by the LSC, one is in receipt of joint funding, eight are funded entirely by the health authority, three are funded by the local authority and one is privately funded. Currently, a third of all learners are from minority ethnic heritage, with an equal number of male and female learners in the college.
3. The college offers three curriculum pathways: 'Building Skills for Independence' is a three year course designed for school leavers and young adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who need a significant level of support within a college environment; the second, a 'Post-16 options course', is a two year full-time course designed to develop effective communication, self-awareness and social skills; and the third pathway is the 'Skills for Access course', which aims to develop transferable skills to support opportunities to access local community venues, vocational placements and leisure pursuits.
4. Orchard Hill's mission is: 'to provide an education service which offers equality of opportunity to all staff and learners, to respect learners as individuals and adult learners and at all times to establish quality relationships and interactions which reflect the learners' adult status and ability to learn'.

## 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>Outstanding: Contributory Grade 1</i>

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. Orchard Hill is a good college and learners' achievement and standards are good, particularly in relation to their learning goals. Learners develop high levels of self-esteem and motivation. The framework for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) is well embedded. On leaving college, 60% of learners go into further education or employment. Achievement is well celebrated.
6. Teaching and learning are good. Lesson planning is detailed and well matched to individual needs. Staff are well qualified. Initial and baseline assessments are detailed and the outcomes are successfully used to inform relevant individual learning programmes. However, many objectives lack clarity and are too generic. Outstanding mutual and genuine respect enables good interactions and trust between learners and staff. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide outstanding support for learning.
7. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners and social and educational inclusion is good. The individually designed programmes and community activities take full account of the diverse needs of learners. The curriculum provides clear progression routes. Increased work placement opportunities for all learners reflect the college's emphasis on training and employability. A good range of social, leisure and additional learning in the community is actively promoted.
8. Support and guidance are good. The college provides a good range of specialist multi-disciplinary support staff. The integrated provision from the nursing and therapy team provides outstanding and appropriate individual support throughout the learners' programmes. Regular, effective personal tutorials review all aspects of the learners' programme. Transition arrangements are good. However, arrangements with the local Connexions partnership are limited. Arrangements to formalise systems to gather and act upon learners' views are underdeveloped.
9. Leadership and management are good. The senior management team provides strong leadership. The self-assessment report is inclusive and mainly accurate. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding and successfully underpins all college activities. Arrangements to improve the quality of the college's provision are satisfactory overall. Whilst there is a well established lesson observation process, the main focus is on teaching and insufficient attention is given to learning and achievement. The college is compliant with relevant equalities and safeguarding legislation.

## Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The college has good capacity to improve. The curriculum is effectively modified in response to learners' needs and changes within the staffing structure are well supported by staff and governors. The college's accommodation strategy and its plans to widen participation within the local community are clearly defined. Staff and managers at all levels demonstrate a strong commitment to continuous improvement. Effective leadership from the senior management team ensures a strong focus on improving quality and maximising the full potential of every learner. Governors are highly committed, well informed and monitor the college's performance successfully. Specialist resources are good and are used effectively to support learners. The self-assessment report is inclusive and is mostly accurate.

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. Learners now have appropriate access to communication aids and a range of media to suit their needs, including fully trained staff who use signing extensively. The college has strengthened its specialist therapeutic team and employed speech and language therapists and physiotherapists. Procedures for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults are now detailed and well established.

## Key strengths

- good standard of learners' work in relation to their learning goals
- outstanding ethos of mutual respect between staff and learners promotes good interactions
- highly individualised and effective curriculum
- outstanding multi-disciplinary support for all learners
- outstanding promotion of equality of opportunity
- strong leadership promotes the vision of the college successfully.

*The college should address:*

## Areas for improvement

- the clarity and specific nature of learning objectives
- the formalisation of systems to gather and act upon learners' views
- the focus on learning and achievement in the lesson observation scheme.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

12. Achievement and standards are good. Learners have a detailed initial assessment which involves high quality contributions from a range of multi-disciplinary staff. Pre-course assessment outcomes are used effectively to inform a coherent baseline assessment from which progress can be measured. The college uses this information well to set relevant targets. Staff then effectively track, monitor and evaluate progress for each individual learner compared to their prior attainment and potential. During the period 2006/07, over 80% of individual learning objectives were achieved. Learners are actively involved in setting their own objectives; the RARPA framework is well applied. An appropriate range of national awards is well used and carefully matched to learners' goals. Learners develop high levels of motivation and self-esteem in both the college and community setting. Achievement is well celebrated.
13. The standard of work in relation to the learners' individual goals is good. The personalised curriculum successfully promotes appropriate learning opportunities for all learners. When asked, learners indicated that they had all achieved their objectives because their needs and aspirations were being effectively addressed. The learners develop skills which contribute to their social and economic well-being. The satellite college venues ensure that learners are able to make an exceptionally positive contribution to their own community.
14. The destinations of learners are good; for the period 2006/07, on leaving college 60% went into further education or employment. There has been an increase in the number of learners accessing a mixed programme of part-time study coupled with either supplementary employment or voluntary work; it has risen from two learners during the period 2004/05 to 2005/06 to 29 learners in 2006/07. The college acknowledges that more work is necessary to further develop appropriate destinations for learners. Attendance and retention rates are high and as expected for a specialist college.

### Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

15. Teaching and learning are good. The college successfully employs a person-centred approach and planning is detailed. In the majority of lessons observed, learners were taught to a high standard and activities were well matched to individual need. The learners were successfully engaged and demonstrated high levels of enjoyment in the activities. Outstanding genuine and mutual respect between learners and staff enables good interaction and trust. Staff promote equality and diversity aspects through the curriculum very well.
16. The setting of learner objectives is clearly based upon the outcomes of initial and baseline assessments. These outcomes successfully inform the support plans and the individual learning plan. There are strong links between the individual learning plans, lesson planning and individual learner programmes.



However, some objectives lack clarity and are too generic. The college accurately identified this area for improvement in their self-assessment report.

17. Staff are well qualified and the college invests heavily in targeted training to develop their skills to enhance the learner experience. Well deployed teaching assistants provide outstanding support for learning. Good use of communication supports teaching strategies, such as intensive interaction, Makaton signs and symbols, and extensive use of objects of reference. The college offers excellent support for the safety of learners in community settings. The multi-disciplinary approach to assessment and in-class support are successful in modelling best practice. Classrooms are well resourced and materials and activities are age appropriate. The comprehensive multi-disciplinary assessment ensures that learners are provided with appropriate individual equipment.
18. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is good. Learners access a personalised, tailor-made curriculum that reflects individuals' ability, aptitude, needs and aspirations. Whilst the curriculum framework is still in draft form and is in the pilot stage, it is evident that it is already having a good impact. The curriculum is suitable for all learners and offers clear progression routes.
19. This year the number of learners accessing work experience has more than doubled to 42. However, the college recognises the need to further extend these opportunities for all learners. Inclusion in the 'Sutton Business Partnership' has been pivotal in increasing external work placements as well as helping to raise awareness of how local businesses can work with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learners have access to an increased range of enterprising ventures and development of vocational skills within the revised curriculum.
20. The college responds well to external requirements and local circumstances. The revised curriculum has been created as a direct result of changing needs. Effective partnerships have been established to develop learners' economic well-being and to further promote the vocational curriculum. Although some of these partnerships are fairly new, initial indications for the future of their success are very positive. A good range of social, leisure and additional learning opportunities within the local community is actively promoted. Learners are encouraged to identify preferred activities and then the college signposts the location where the activities are being held.
21. Support and guidance for learners are good overall. As accurately identified in the self-assessment report, the college judges its range of specialist therapy and medical provision to be good. Very effective use is made of the specialist therapeutic team. They successfully contribute to assessments, devise strategies, advise other staff and offer outstanding support for learners throughout their individual programmes. Individual tutorials are regular and effective at reviewing progress. Transition arrangements are good and appropriately involve person-centred planning and a multi-disciplinary approach. Learners are actively encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

22. Arrangements with the local Connexions partnership are limited. The college successfully renewed its 'Information and Guidance' Matrix accreditation in 2006. However, learners have limited access to appropriate careers information and guidance to help them make informed choices about their future. Arrangements to formally gather and act upon learner views are underdeveloped. A learner council has been formed this year but is not representative of all learners across all college sites. However, learners have had some opportunities in giving short presentations to the governing body.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

*Contributory grade:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Outstanding: Grade 1*

23. Leadership and management are good. The senior management team provides strong leadership to promote the vision of the college which is clearly understood and shared by staff and governors. A restructuring of staff, including new senior and middle management roles, has been very effectively planned and implemented. Strategic planning clearly centres on the individual needs of learners, and managers have developed a range of external satellite sites very well. Further sites are planned to enable individuals to access the college's provision in their local home areas.
24. The self-assessment process is inclusive and involves all staff, governors and stakeholders in appraising past performance of the college as a whole and in identifying its main strengths and areas for improvement. An annual away-day for all staff facilitates this process. The self-assessment report is mainly accurate.
25. A wide range of partnerships, that enhances the services for learners, has been developed very well. Formal service level agreements are in place with local adult and further education colleges and community organisations. Community activities are used very effectively for both short-term and longer-term projects. A range of learner information is collated, analysed and used well to inform managers. Staff are now able to upload information electronically to update information about learners' support plans. However, the recording of learners' achievement and progress still relies on a paper-based system.
26. Arrangements to improve the quality of provision are satisfactory overall. The college has a clear quality assurance policy and set of procedures. An annual audit plan highlights scheduled monitoring activities across all areas of college activities. A quality improvement plan is regularly reviewed at the weekly management meetings and during governors' meetings. Whilst there is a well established lesson observation process there is too much emphasis on teaching activities and insufficient attention to learning and achievement. Some of the grades awarded do not match the recorded judgements.
27. Staff development and training are good. Staff have good opportunities to engage in a wide variety of training events and all have received training in the

protection of vulnerable adults and in child protection. All teaching staff have, or are working towards, appropriate teaching qualifications. Managers support staff very well to develop their skills and qualifications and many progress to more senior posts within the college. The college operates a very useful professional resource centre to share good practice and to provide training for colleagues in other organisations. Communication between staff is effective. A well planned cycle of meetings provides opportunities to disseminate information, share good practice and to contribute, for example, to changes in the curriculum and in the self-assessment process.

28. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding and is central to all college activities. The exceptional ethos of the college contributes very positively to the way that all learners and staff are valued. Detailed plans to widen participation and extend its provision through additional satellite sites are in place. Currently, a third of all learners are from minority ethnic heritage, with an equal number of male and female learners in the college. A range of equality and diversity policies covers all relevant legislation and the college is fully compliant with legislation requirements of the Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA) and Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. Action plans are well implemented, regularly monitored and evaluated. The college has a high regard for the safety of its learners. Arrangements for safeguarding are comprehensive and detailed. Risk assessments are very well developed for each individual learner. Complaints are dealt with appropriately and in a timely way.
29. Financial planning and management are good. Governors are highly committed, well informed and monitor the college's performance effectively. Specialist resources are good and support learners effectively. The college's accommodation strategy is clear, detailed and reviewed regularly. Plans are well advanced to open a unit at a local further education college next year. The college provides good value for money.