

Oakwood Court College

Inspection report

Provider reference 131947
Published date January 2009

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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.

Description of the provider

1. Oakwood Court College, based in Dawlish, Devon, is an independent, residential specialist college providing further education for learners aged 16 to 25. Phoenix Learning & Care Ltd acquired the College in April 2008 as part of its takeover of Education and Care (Devon) Ltd. A new principal was appointed in January 2008.
2. There are currently 35 residential learners, 10 of whom are female and 2 who are under 18 years of age. One learner is from a minority ethnic background. Learners have a range of learning difficulties and/or social or emotional difficulties including Down's syndrome, autistic spectrum disorder, epilepsy and speech and communication difficulties. Some have specific conditions such as

Williams Syndrome and mental health issues. The primary aim of the college is to ensure individual 'quality of life' through 'education for choice and empowerment'.

3. The main teaching accommodation is on the Oakwood Court site. Accommodation is provided within the Oakwood Court campus and in houses within the local community. There is also accommodation comprising four independent flats on the same road as the main college.
4. The college provides a range of courses, both on and off site, and offers internal and external accreditation. Programmes include creative arts programmes of drama, music or art and craft and vocational skills programmes of horticulture, animal care, workshop, maintenance and catering. The college has links with local further education colleges.

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 | Inadequate: Grade 4 |
| <i>Equality of opportunity</i> | <i>Inadequate: contributory grade 4</i> |

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. This is a satisfactory college. Overall learners' achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners make good progress in developing their personal and social skills. There is satisfactory achievement of externally accredited qualifications and of internally awarded certificates. Destinations of learners moving into supported living, further training or employment are satisfactory overall. Attendance and punctuality are monitored appropriately.
6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons are mostly well structured. Behaviour management is very effective. Learners are set clear and measurable differentiated targets. Core targets are now set for literacy and numeracy and these are starting to be embedded into learners' overall programmes. Arrangements to review learners' progress are thorough but the system for recording targets and progress is new and it is too early to judge its effectiveness.
7. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners and educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. A well designed and planned curriculum focuses very well on developing vocational skills. The promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum is satisfactory. The enrichment activities programme is wide and varied but there is insufficient time planned for learners to participate.
8. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Very effective links with specialist agencies support learners well. Arrangements for complaints and grievances are satisfactory, as are induction and personal tutorial activities. The transition programme has been improved for pre-entry activities and is satisfactory. However, there is insufficient focus on providing a cohesive transition programme during learners' time at the college and for their next step when they leave.
9. Leadership and management are inadequate. A clear vision is shared by management and staff, and communication between staff and directors is good. Managers do not focus sufficiently on quality improvement or equality and diversity. The new quality cycle has not yet been fully implemented. The race equality action plan is not systematically monitored and actions have not been completed. The college has yet to fully respond to the requirements for the safeguarding of children.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. The college's capacity to improve is satisfactory overall. Directors and senior managers are aware of the college's key priorities and have developed a realistic strategic plan to enable the college to move forward. Staff support the strategic direction of the college and have confidence in the new directors. The

new management structure has clear lines of responsibility. Communication between staff and the directors is good. It is not possible to judge the overall impact of the quality cycle, which includes observations of teaching and learning, self-assessment and other performance monitoring measures, because it is too new. However, some monitoring lacks rigour. The self-assessment report did not identify some of the college's strengths or key areas for improvement. It is not sufficiently evaluative.

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

11. The college has made satisfactory progress in addressing the key issues identified in the last inspection. It has improved its provision for literacy and numeracy and it is now satisfactory. Staff training in specific learning difficulties and disabilities is now good. Strategic planning has improved. The review of learners' progress is now thorough but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the processes for tracking and monitoring learner achievement. The college still needs to develop further the links with other colleges to provide a wider range of vocational opportunities. The transition programme to prepare learners for leaving the college is not given sufficient priority. The college has not fully responded to the requirements for safeguarding children or the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

Key strengths

- good progress in personal and social skills
- effective behaviour management
- strong curriculum focus on developing vocational skills
- very effective provision for specialist support
- clear vision for the development of the college.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the use of other education providers to extend learners' experience
- the transition programme
- the opportunities for child protection training
- the rigour in monitoring quality improvement
- the implementation and monitoring of the race equality policy.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

12. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The grade in the college's self-assessment report was overstated. The good progress that learners make in their personal development and social skills is recognised and captured very well. The college awards its own certificates to celebrate learners' achievement of these skills. All but two learners during 2007/08 achieved a variety of internally accredited awards.
13. Learners' achievement of externally accredited vocational qualifications is satisfactory. Of the 33 learners enrolled at the college last year, 17 achieved a vocational related external award. Significantly more learners achieved external awards in information technology (IT) subjects in 2007/08 than in the previous year. In 2006/07 six learners achieved seven units and during 2007/08 12 learners achieved 40 units. The majority of learners achieved an external award for some type of enrichment activity; for example, in swimming, first aid and volunteering. However, few learners attend local further education colleges to gain level 1 or 2 qualifications.
14. Learners make satisfactory progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. All learners are set targets which are regularly monitored. Progress is reinforced during curriculum and enrichment activities.
15. Overall destinations of learners are satisfactory. Over the past three years satisfactory numbers of learners moved into supported living. Of the eight leavers in 2005/06, five progressed into employment. Over the past two years the rate has been lower with only four progressing into employment of some type. A satisfactory number of learners carry on with further training or education when they leave the college. Retention and attendance are satisfactory and in line with other similar colleges.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

16. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons are often well structured, lively and interesting. Teachers use well chosen practical tasks and resources, including IT, to develop learners' skills. Skilled behaviour management allows learners to participate to the best of their ability. Learners have clear and measurable differentiated core targets, including four for literacy and numeracy. These are shared across all staff and addressed in most lessons. Progress against specific skill targets is carefully recorded after each lesson alongside any core targets met. A thorough half-termly review establishes learners' progress overall. However, the system for target setting and review has only recently been implemented and its effectiveness is yet to be demonstrated.
17. Constructive specialist literacy and numeracy observations and monthly meetings provide support for staff in developing skills for life through the

- curriculum. Staff awareness of literacy and numeracy issues has improved but teaching strategies to embed literacy and numeracy are in the early stages of development. The college does not use the general lesson observation scheme thoroughly enough to give a clear idea of the quality of teaching and learning overall. This area is not graded in the self-assessment report.
18. The programme of courses to meet the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. The revised curriculum is well designed and focuses strongly on developing vocational skills. The range of courses includes woodwork, construction, ground maintenance, animal care, horticulture, catering and retail. All learners attend well chosen weekly work experience placements in settings that include stables, kitchens, offices, warehouses, small shops and garden centres. Sessions on working for the community further develop learners' skills as well as their awareness of their potential contribution to community life. The extended curriculum offer, including a range of physical activities, is satisfactory in breadth but learners are not able to attend events often enough. The college is increasing its links with other education and training providers but few learners attend courses at local further education colleges as part of their programmes. This was not identified as an area for improvement in the self-assessment report.
 19. Support and guidance for learners are satisfactory. The college has developed very effective links with external specialist agencies to meet learners' emotional and other support needs. A speech and language therapist is employed three days a week and a counsellor visits the college once a week for scheduled meetings with learners. Other well established links include psychiatric and psychological services, anger management, sexual health, occupational therapy and dyslexia specialists. Staff also benefit very well from these links. For example, during a recent staff meeting, a therapist from the local gender identity unit gave a presentation to raise staff awareness.
 20. Transition arrangements for learners entering the college have improved since the last inspection. Pre-entry assessment is thorough. All learners are now visited in their schools and discussions take place with parents/carers and local Connexions staff when possible. Very useful pen portraits are developed and help the college to plan more effectively for the initial support of learners during the extended assessment in the first term. Learners and parents/carers are provided with a good range of information including some initial information about the college, a student handbook and student charter. Information is appropriately provided in different formats.
 21. The transition plan does not focus sufficiently on the learners' activities during their time at college or for the next stage when they leave. This was not identified as an area for improvement by the college. The link between the transition and work preparation programmes is inadequate. Links with the local Connexions Partnership are satisfactory with a formal agreement in place. However, access to careers resources to assist learners in making informed choices about future work or training goals is limited.

22. Arrangements for learners to make complaints and report grievances are satisfactory. Responses to complaints are dealt with appropriately and in a timely way. Arrangements for induction and for personal tutorial activities are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Inadequate: Grade 4

Contributory grade:

Equality of opportunity

Inadequate: grade 4

23. Leadership and management are inadequate. The directors and senior managers have defined a clear vision for the college, which is understood and fully supported by staff. The management structure has clear lines of responsibility. Communication between staff and the directors is good. The senior management board and the senior management team meet regularly but there is an insufficient focus on quality improvement and equality and diversity activities in these meetings. The principal has recently formed two new groups to monitor aspects of college provision. A college council, comprised of parents, directors and staff at different levels from across the college, will meet six times a year. A quality and curriculum group comprising the senior management team and academic and residential co-ordinators will meet each half term. The aim of the quality and curriculum group is to promote cross-college working and monitor quality improvement processes. However, both groups are very new and it is too early to judge the impact of their work.
24. A new quality cycle, which incorporates observations of teaching and learning, self-assessment and other measures to monitor performance, has recently been developed but it is not yet possible to judge its impact. The college's teaching and learning observation scheme does not adequately help to improve teaching and learning across the college. Too few observations took place last year to effectively inform the college about the quality of its teaching and learning. Feedback from parents, carers and learners is satisfactory. A proactive student council has been established. Self-assessment is not sufficiently evaluative and the self-assessment report did not identify some key areas for improvement, particularly in leadership and management.
25. The college is not yet fully responding to its responsibilities for safeguarding children. Criminal record bureau checks are in place but there has been no staff training in child protection since May 2007 and only 10 staff have had child protection training. Adult protection training is up to date. Other aspects of learners' health and safety are satisfactory.
26. The college is compliant with requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 but does not fully comply with requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The college has an equal opportunities policy and action plan. However, many actions in the race equality action plan have not been completed and it has not been systematically monitored since its production. The monitoring of equality and diversity is not given sufficient

priority by the board and senior managers. There is satisfactory promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum.

27. There has been slow progress in addressing some of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and reinspection. The tracking and monitoring of learners' progress is at a transitional stage from a paper to a computer-based system as part of a planned migration of student information. Learner progression onto vocational programmes at other colleges is still low.
28. Appraisal for all staff has only been introduced since September 2008 and at the time of the inspection no staff had been appraised. Additionally, there have been no supervisions of teaching staff and learning support assistants undertaken since the autumn of 2007. Staff development is satisfactory overall. It includes an NVQ qualification for learning support assistants and care staff.
29. Partnership working is underdeveloped. The college has contacts with three general further education colleges and two specialist colleges but there are no protocols in place for how the colleges will work together. There are links with individual local employers to facilitate work experience but there are no strategic links with chambers of trade in the local areas. Staff are appropriately qualified and resources are generally satisfactory. Improvements in the management of the college have yet to impact on the quality of the provision. Value for money is satisfactory.