

# Homefield College

## Inspection report

---

Provider reference 131893  
Published date December 2008

## Contents

---

Background information	3
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement	6
Key strengths and areas for improvement	7
Main findings	8

## 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 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. Homefield College was established in 1987 as an independent long-term residential provision for people with autistic spectrum disorders and/or learning difficulties. It was privately owned until the end of 2003. The long-term residents, funded by Social Services, are now accommodated in six houses in the local village. The organisation became a registered charity at the end of June 2006, following the establishment of a Board of Trustees. In 1996 the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) began funding learners to attend the college on two- or three-year courses. The college campus building is situated on a residential estate in the large village of Sileby, which is six miles south of Loughborough and about ten miles north of Leicester. The college also provides accommodation for four learners funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) on a residential estate in an urban area about seven miles from the college. The college's resources include a horticultural enterprise at one of the houses, administration offices and an e-retail enterprise facility in a local factory. The college has recently opened a tea room/sweet shop/internet café, "Barrow of Treats", in a nearby village. There are formal partnership agreements with three local general further education (FE) colleges.
2. Homefield College has broadened its provision to include day places during the last nine years. There are now 31 LSC-funded learners, of whom 19 are residential and 12 are day learners. The learner population incorporates young people with complex needs, including those with Autistic Spectrum Conditions and communication and learning difficulties. Approximately three-quarters of the learner population display autistic traits and some display behaviour that challenges. Day learners travel from Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Warwickshire and Staffordshire. Residential learners are mostly from the East Midlands, West Midlands, the Home Counties and the Isles of Scilly. The gender balance of LSC-funded learners changes year by year. In 2007/08 females comprise less than a third of all learners. During the same period just over a third of all learners were from minority ethnic backgrounds.
3. The mission statement for the college has recently been revised and states that the college aims to give learners as many opportunities as possible to become independent according to their own individual skills and potential.

## 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: contributory grade 2</i>

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. This is a good college. Learners' achievement and standards across the college are good. Learners achieve very well against their individual learning targets. Opportunities for achieving externally accredited qualifications have increased and learners who are entered for these achieve high success rates. Learners make significant progress in developing social, independence and communication skills. The destinations of learners when they leave college are satisfactory. Very few learners gain employment, although the majority succeed in moving into some type of supported living arrangement and enrol at local colleges on part-time or full-time courses.
5. Teaching and learning which takes place in realistic working environments, are good. Generally, lessons are well planned with tasks tailored very well for each individual learner. Learners are encouraged during lessons to review and assess their own development. Resources for learners with complex needs are good. Arrangements for pre-entry assessments and ongoing baseline assessments are thorough. The inclusion of literacy, numeracy and communication skills within teaching activities has improved and is now good.
6. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners and educational and social inclusion is outstanding. Learners' programmes are very well designed to meet their individual needs. Links within the local community are excellent. Opportunities to learn and practise new work skills are well planned through an expanding and innovative range of internal and external work placements. The promotion of equality and diversity is at the core of the college's operations.
7. Support and guidance are good. Pre-entry information and guidance are good and induction is very helpful for learners. Behaviour and communication plans are excellent and there is good access to both medical and specialist support. Regular tutorials are effective at reviewing the learners' entire programme. However, on occasions this proves to be overly ambitious as too many aspects of the programmes are covered. Transition arrangements are effectively planned.
8. Leadership and management are good. The senior management team is supported very well by newly appointed middle managers and clearly focused to make improvements across the college. The college has developed strong and effective links with both local and national partners. The standard of specialist resources is good. Arrangements for staff development are good. Quality assurance arrangements are effective. Self-assessment is rigorous and includes the views of all staff. Whilst there is an established lesson observation process, there is no clear analysis of the overall quality of teaching and learning. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good and the college is compliant with relevant equalities and safeguarding legislation.

## Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

9. The college demonstrates good capacity to improve. It has made good progress in developing the provision further to meet the needs of learners since the last inspection. Management capacity has been strengthened by successfully devolving responsibility and accountability throughout the organisation. Quality assurance arrangements are good. Procedures for self-assessment are rigorous. The college's self-assessment underrated the quality of some aspects of its provision which were judged to be better by inspectors. Financial planning to meet its strategic objectives is sound. The trustee board, which has been in existence since 2006, has a clear understanding of its responsibilities and is increasingly effective at monitoring college performance.

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

10. The college has successfully addressed all the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. There is now good specialist assessment at the pre-admission stage to ensure appropriate support is in place before learners start their programmes. Target setting to inform individual learning plans has improved and this aspect of the provision is now good. Risk assessments for work placements are thorough and effective. Appropriate systems are in place to safeguard learners and all staff have regular training to update them on procedures. The college is compliant with legislative requirements on safeguarding.

## Key strengths

- very good achievement of personal, communication and work skills
- very effective use of realistic teaching and learning environments
- outstanding range of programmes and resources that promotes learning
- excellent behaviour and communication plans to support individual learners
- good leadership and management that promotes quality improvement
- strong partnership working with external organisations.

## Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- the insufficient clarity in the evaluation of the overall quality of teaching and learning.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

11. Achievement and standards of learners' work are good. These are accurately identified in the college's self-assessment report. Learners make good progress in relation to targets identified in their individual learning plans. Since the last inspection there is a greater emphasis on entering learners on courses leading to nationally accredited awards. Learners achieve well on courses leading to the qualifications they are entered, including sports leadership at entry level 1; pre-entry qualification in hairdressing and beauty and literacy and numeracy awards. In 2007/08, all learners attending one of the three local further education colleges were successful in gaining the qualifications they were entered for.
12. Learners make significant progress in developing social, independence and communication skills. Community venues are used extensively and very appropriately to practise these skills. Learners make significant improvements in their ability to communicate more effectively. Learners enjoy gaining work skills which are well developed through a range of successfully planned internal and externally organised work placements.
13. Destinations of learners are satisfactory overall. Over the past two years the majority of learners have moved into appropriate supported living environments. A satisfactory number of learners continue with their education. Just under half of the learners who have left over the past two years enrolled on either full- or part-time courses at local general FE colleges. The college acknowledges that too few learners go on into work of some kind. They are currently working with an organisation that provides support for individuals entering employment to improve these outcomes. Attendance and punctuality of learners is satisfactory overall and are well monitored.

### Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

14. Teaching and learning are good overall. Inspectors judged that the college had underestimated this strength. Lessons are well planned and clearly record learners' individual objectives, including specific targets for literacy, numeracy and communication. Staff are very aware of learners' behaviour management and communication plans and use them very effectively. Learners are encouraged during lessons to review and assess their own development. Tasks are individually designed to help develop each learner's skills at an appropriate level. Staff are very skilled at helping learners with social interactions and communication and with developing independence skills as part of their learning.
15. Learners are taught within realistic work environments. The range of work placements linked to learners' vocational programmes is used very effectively for teaching and learning. Resources for learners with complex needs are good. Staff use a wide range of pictorial communication resources to promote



- decision-making and independence. Makaton signing is now a well established communication method and commonly, and appropriately, used by staff and learners. Information technology is used effectively to support learning.
16. Initial and ongoing baseline assessments are comprehensive. The college has revised how they assess learners' literacy and numeracy skills and have made it a less complicated process. Arrangements for developing learners' literacy, numeracy and communication skills have improved since the last inspection. Key members of staff support teachers and support assistants generally very well to help identify opportunities to embed these skills. However, staff are sometimes over rigorous in their attempts to include learners' core targets when they are not relevant to the task being undertaken by the learner.
  17. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The self-assessment report underestimates this area of their provision. Learners participate in a wide variety of activities, work experience and travel training which extends their community involvement and independence. Very effective links have been established with three local general FE colleges to provide opportunities for learners to participate within mainstream education settings. Learners have greater opportunities to work towards a wider range of vocational qualifications.
  18. Opportunities for learners to participate in both internal and external work placements are excellent and a very effective resource for learning and reinforcing new skills. All learners take part in the good range of internal work placements and those sited within the local community and/or progress into external work experience. Over the past three years, the number and range of employers that provide external work placements has increased. The number of learners accessing external work placements doubled in 2007/08 from the previous year. The college has recently opened an exceptionally well refurbished combined internet café and sweet shop in a nearby local village, which is staffed by learners. Learners are also involved in an innovative e-retail facility that has been developed and sited within a local factory.
  19. The extended curriculum is planned well and learners enjoy and take part in the wide range of activities available. Planned activities at weekends have improved since the time of the last inspection. Good attention is given to health and safety as well as the promotion of healthy living.
  20. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that guidance and support are good. Pre-entry information and guidance are clear and easily accessible. There are very good systems for induction, which help learners to settle into college life. The college has excellent behaviour and communication plans to meet the needs of learners. There is good access to medical and specialist support and to a range of sensory therapies. Effective arrangements are in place to support learners who attend the local colleges as part of their programme. Comprehensive tutorial arrangements support all aspects of a learner's programme. For residential learners, this includes regular meetings with support tutors who carry out thorough checks on their welfare and well-being. In addition all learners have weekly meetings with their personal tutor to

monitor their progress, plus subject tutorials. A particular strength is the successful attempts by the college to involve learners more actively in reviews of their progress. Occasionally, tutors try to cover too many aspects of the learner's programme in a tutorial which limits their full participation. There is regular contact with parents and carers. This enables learners to practise skills they are developing at college within their own home environment. There are effective systems in place to help learners make the transition when they leave college and staff are well qualified to offer information, advice and guidance on future plans.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

*Contributory grade:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Good: grade 2*

21. Leadership and management are good. This was accurately identified in the self-assessment report. There is a clear focus on quality improvement across the whole organisation. This is driven well by the senior leadership team and supported by successful initiatives to develop the skills of middle managers. A culture of devolved responsibility, with clear lines of accountability, is well embedded in the college. Teamwork and communications are good. The impact of this is seen in improvements made across many aspects of the provision, notably in curriculum, resources and student achievement.
22. Quality assurance arrangements are good. Self-assessment is rigorous. All staff are effectively involved in the process and there is thorough external moderation of the college's judgements about the quality of its provision. Inspectors agreed with the majority of judgements in the self-assessment report. There is comprehensive monitoring of teaching and learning, including formal graded observations and drop-in checks. New staff are closely monitored. There is good follow up of aspects of teaching and learning judged to be unsatisfactory or in need of further development. However, the system is complex and the outcomes of the various checks are not sufficiently coordinated to provide a clear analysis of the overall quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors found strengths in this aspect to be understated and weaknesses to be overstated.
23. Partnership working with a wide range of external organisations is strong. This is having a very positive impact on the range of opportunities available to learners. The college has a good understanding of the national and local context within which it works and this is used well in planning the future strategic direction of the college. The college uses good practice examples within the sector very effectively to improve the quality of its own provision; for example, it has introduced successful initiatives to enable the learner voice to have a stronger influence in the decision-making processes.
24. There is a good standard of specialist resources to support the curriculum. The college has invested substantially to ensure that developments in the vocational curriculum are matched by good quality resources. All staff are appropriately

qualified for the roles they undertake and some staff have very good levels of specialist qualifications; for example, in autistic spectrum disorders and in information, advice and guidance. Staff development is a strong feature of the organisation. Uptake of staff development is monitored well to ensure the college's strategic objectives are being met.

25. The trustees have been working hard since the inception of the board in 2006 to develop their understanding of the work of the college. They carry out their legal responsibilities well, including monitoring of arrangements to ensure safeguarding procedures are in place. Trustees and all staff are regularly updated on national requirements for safeguarding and the college complies with its legal requirements. Trustees are increasingly effective in monitoring the work of the college. The recently developed 'link' role is helping them in this task. Monitoring of the college finances is sound and the college provides good value for money. Trustees are acutely aware of the need to ensure their membership is more representative of the student population in terms of gender and ethnicity and steps taken to address this are beginning to have a positive impact.
26. Promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college monitors achievement of learners by gender, ethnicity and types of disability well. There is good promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum. There is good attention to ensure that potential stereotyping by gender is avoided in learners' options. The college monitors recruitment of staff and learners and has targets to raise the percentage of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds to match more closely the student profile. It has had some success, with the percentage rising from 5% to 13% in recent years. Access to buildings has improved. The college complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. It has a well planned Single Equality Scheme, which is regularly reviewed at meetings of the Equality and Diversity group to determine its impact.