

Reaseheath College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130623

Name of lead inspector: Bryan Davies HMI

Last day of inspection: 12 February 2010

Type of provider: Specialist college

Address: Reaseheath College
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Information about the provider

1. Reaseheath College is a specialist provider of vocational education and training in further education (FE) and higher education (HE) for businesses, industries and communities which are mainly, but not exclusively, rural and land based. The college's mission is 'to inspire individuals, communities and rural businesses by delivering world class education and skills accessible to all'.
2. The college provides a diverse range of courses in agriculture, horticulture, animal management, equine studies, adventure sport, countryside management, food technology, land-based engineering and technology, construction and business. The college offers work-based learning, adult and community learning and has over 500 HE learners in partnership with local universities. The college is the National Dairy Champion within a sector skills academy for food and drink. The college manages a commercial estate including a farm, golf course and zoo of over 280 hectares.
3. Full- and part-time enrolments have grown steadily by around 10% per year for the past five years. Unemployment and the level of social and economic deprivation in Cheshire are low. The proportion of pupils aged 16 who achieve five or more GCSEs at grade A* to C, including English and mathematics, in Cheshire is above the national average. Most learners live in Cheshire and adjacent counties but the college recruits nationally onto its specialist provision. Around 300 learners come from areas of high social deprivation. The college provides residential accommodation for 500 FE and HE learners. The college has invested £20 million in resources in the last three years. At the time of the inspection further development in animal management and food technology resources was underway.
4. The college provides training on behalf of the following provider:
 - Cheshire East Council

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	312 part-time learners
Further education (16 to 18)	1,279 full-time learners 104 part-time learners
Foundation learning	300 full-time learners 162 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	185 full-time learners 192 part-time learners

Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	723 learners 180 apprentices
Informal Adult Learning :	1,596 learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Subject areas	Grade
Animal management	2
Equine management	2
Horticulture	2
Engineering	1
Residential and welfare provision	2

Overall effectiveness

- This is a good college, with outstanding partnership work with employers, schools and other stakeholders. Provision in the subject areas inspected was good or outstanding. Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates for apprentices and Train to Gain learners, completing within agreed timescales, are good and improving. The standard of their work is good and on some programmes it is outstanding. Learners develop good practical skills and are well prepared for employment. They feel safe and demonstrate a good awareness of health and safety. The college provides a safe, happy and nurturing environment. Learners' contribution to college life and the local community is very strong.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are mostly good. Practical teaching is especially good. Initial assessment is used well to identify learners' support needs; support is implemented promptly and is effective. Additional support is

good. Tutorials are effective. However, in a number of subject areas some learners are not sufficiently challenged, their progress is insufficiently monitored and they do not always understand how to improve their work. The growing range of provision including enrichment and part-time courses for adults is good. Links with schools have supported an extensive and successful programme for learners aged 14 to 16. The college meets the needs of employers very well. Work with employers benefits learners through high quality resources and enhanced staff expertise.

7. Leadership and management are good. Governance is outstanding and both supports and challenges staff. Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive and inclusive. Good use is made of the learner and employer voice. Curriculum self-assessment is largely accurate but cross-college grades were overly positive. The drive for continuous improvement is strong but the action plan to improve teaching and learning is not monitored sufficiently rigorously. Physical resources are good and many are outstanding. Safeguarding is managed well and the promotion of equality and diversity is good.

Main findings

- The college offers a safe, welcoming and nurturing environment, which is much valued by learners. Learners feel safe and have a very good awareness of health and safety. They demonstrate great pride in being a member of the Reaseheath community and are delighted with the college and their courses. Learners contribute well to the life of the college and to local communities. However, the college does not have good systems to record or measure these wider outcomes for learners.
- On FE courses success rates are good overall but satisfactory at advanced levels. On some courses too few learners achieve high grades and learners transfer to different, often less challenging courses late in the year. Learners attend regularly and make good progress. Success rates for apprentices and Train to Gain learners are good and improving. Adult learners who attend part-time non-vocational courses enjoy their courses and they achieve well.
- Learners develop good work-related skills that increase their employment prospects and contribute to their future economic well-being. Over 90% of learners progress to employment or to higher level courses. School pupils enjoy their courses and achieve well and many progress to full-time courses.
- Teaching and learning are good. The better sessions are planned well to meet individuals' preferred learning styles and good checks are made on learning. In less successful sessions tutors dominate the session, checks on learning are insufficient and more-able learners are not challenged. The use of technology to support learning is good in animal management and engineering but underdeveloped in equine management.
- Much assessment is planned well with good feedback to learners but on some advanced programmes, including the national diploma in equine management, assessment is not rigorous enough, written assignments are not sufficiently

challenging and feedback does not show learners how to improve their performance.

- Learners have good opportunities to benefit from paid work experience and to gain additional qualifications which help them become more employable. They also enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities. However, not all learners benefit from these opportunities.
- The college meets the needs of employers very well. In addition to apprenticeships and employer-specific training, the college supports the development of enterprise skills in the rural community. Specialist provision and resources in a number of subject areas benefit both learners and employers. Employers are delighted with the college.
- Partnerships are highly successful and of direct benefit to learners. Partners, including schools, employers and local community groups, report very positively on the flexible, enthusiastic and active way in which their needs are met. The college is very much at the heart of the local community and plays a key role in sustaining community networks and community groups.
- Residential and welfare provision are good. Residential learners are looked after well. They play an integral part in college decision making about residence and social activities. The college operates an extensive, subsidised and well-organised transport scheme to support learners' access to college.
- Leadership is inspirational and governance outstanding. The provision has grown considerably since the last inspection and accommodation and resources improved markedly. The college's values and vision are well understood. Strategic planning is inclusive, coherent and responsive to national and college priorities. The college plays a major role regionally and nationally in the provision of specialist resources and expertise.
- Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive, action plans are detailed and thorough and arrangements to involve learners, employers and others in improving the provision are well established. However, some aspects of quality improvement including the observation of teaching and learning are insufficiently critical. Progress in implementing improvements is not monitored sufficiently rigorously.
- Curriculum self-assessment is largely accurate. However, the college self-assessment report is overly positive, partly due to optimistic judgements about learner outcomes, resulting from issues related to data entry.
- Arrangements to safeguard learners and assure their safety and security are comprehensive and effective. The college makes appropriate checks on the suitability of adults including those who are resident to work with young people and vulnerable adults. The college also checks adults who are resident onsite and not employed by the college but these checks are not always carried out soon enough.
- The college has a strong commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity. This is implemented successfully in many aspects of provision but not sufficiently in teaching and learning.

- Financial management and control are outstanding and the college is in a healthy financial position. Human resources are managed well. Learning resources and accommodation are of high quality. Residential accommodation is mostly good.

What does Reaseheath College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure learners achieve their full potential by increasing the proportion of high grades, reducing late transfers to less demanding courses, increasing the challenge in lessons and assignment work for more-able learners, providing more detailed feedback to learners on what they need to do to improve and improving the clarity of targets and actions set for learners.
- Improve teaching and learning by increasing the rigour of the observation of teaching, ensuring action plans produced following observations include clear targets and actions on what teachers need to do to improve and monitoring the implementation of these action plans.
- Ensure the range of the additionality and enrichment offer meets the needs of all learners, enrolments on additional qualifications are recorded in a timely way and outcomes are monitored.
- More accurately judge learners' outcomes and the quality of provision by ensuring success rates are recorded accurately.
- Improve the measures to judge the impact of activities which aim to improve learners' health and well-being and their contribution to the community, for example, by recording learner involvement, setting targets and monitoring progress.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- being a learner at Reaseheath
- the safe environment in which they live and study
- relationships with staff who treat them like adults and value their opinions
- relevant and vocational courses which increase their employment prospects
- opportunities for progression to other courses and to HE
- the enrichment opportunities
- the virtual learning environment (VLE) and ability to access it from home
- opportunities for expressing their views
- opportunities to meet different people from different countries and backgrounds.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more up-to-date teaching materials and more class equipment

- more challenge to obtain higher grades and more clarity on the actions needed to improve grades.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the flexible response the college makes to meet their training needs
- the advice and support for their businesses
- the opportunities the college gives to their learners
- the relevance of courses
- good communications with college staff who respond promptly to their requests
- the commitment of the college and its staff to maintaining partnerships.

What employers would like to see improved:

- There were no suggestions.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

8. Outcomes for learners and the quality of provision have improved since the last inspection. The range of provision continues to expand; FE, HE and work-based learning have all grown significantly. The ambitious capital building plans have been largely realised despite the expected funding not being available. Further improvement of physical resources is underway. Managers and staff share a clear vision and plan for the future development of the college focusing on the quality of the learners' experience. Curriculum plans contribute well to the achievement of college objectives. Partnership work, including that with local schools, is outstanding. Management changes have led to improvements in success rates for work-based learners. Safeguarding arrangements are well managed and the pastoral curriculum has improved.
9. The comprehensive quality assurance processes are effective in identifying strengths and areas for improvement and planning for improvement. Self-assessment is inclusive and the views of learners and stakeholders are used well. Curriculum self-assessment is accurate but inspectors awarded lower grades for cross-college aspects than the college. Targets for improvement are challenging but some are based on unreliable learner success data.
10. The strong, challenging and inspirational leadership of the governors and principalship, outstanding partnerships and the commitment and enthusiasm of staff, place the college in a strong position to effect further improvement. Recent appointments to new roles and management development training for middle managers support the college's focus on improvement.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

11. Outcomes for learners are good and have improved steadily since the last inspection. Pass rates on many courses are 100% and retention rates are very high. Attendance is good and learners enjoy their courses. The very high overall success rates on foundation and intermediate courses are inflated by the large number of learners who achieve additional qualifications. Inspectors could not rely on this summary data to provide an accurate picture of the college's success rates at these levels. On advanced courses, which are mainly national diplomas and certificates, success rates are satisfactory but on some courses too few learners achieve high grades. The college makes good arrangements for learners to transfer to higher level courses or to less challenging courses as appropriate and so ensure they leave with a successful outcome. However, too many learners are transferred late in their courses.

12. Overall success rates for apprentices and learners on Train to Gain programmes are good and improving. The proportion of learners achieving their qualifications within the planned time has improved under the current management and is now good. Employers speak highly of learners' skills and the contribution learners make to their businesses. Success rates for key skills are good overall. Achievement rates for the large number of learners on adult and community learning courses are good. These learners enjoy their experience and many take further courses.
13. The college analyses the performance of different groups of learners and there are no significant differences. Those in receipt of additional learning support achieve at least as well as others. Most learners make good progress on their courses and many progress to higher courses. The standard of learners' work, particularly practical work, is good. Learners develop good work-related skills that increase their employment prospects and contribute to their future economic well-being. Over 90% of learners progress to employment or a further programme of study including HE.
14. The college offers a very safe, welcoming and nurturing environment, much valued by learners. They demonstrate great pride in being a member of the Reaseheath community and are delighted with the college and their courses. Learners contribute well to the life of the college and to local communities. They raise large sums of money for local charities during the year, construct community gardens and countryside resources, coach school pupils and invite the public to attend college events such as lambing weekends. However, the college does not have good systems to record or measure these wider outcomes for learners. Learners feel safe; they are well informed about risks and have the knowledge and understanding to make informed choices about their safety, health and well-being. They have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They are confident that any concerns they raise are taken seriously and are addressed effectively.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

15. Teaching and learning are good, particularly practical teaching. The best sessions are well planned and teachers use information collected at initial assessment to inform learning and support. Questioning and formative assessment are used well to check and develop understanding. Tutors use their industrial and commercial experience very effectively to link learning to industry standards. In the less successful sessions tutors dominate and there are too few opportunities for learners to reflect and contribute. Checks on learning are insufficient and more-able learners are not challenged. Inspectors identified more inadequate and less outstanding teaching than the college.
16. Much assessment is good and well planned. Flexible and varied assessment arrangements are used well to support learners with additional needs. In work-based learning, assessment is good. Engineering assessments are varied and interesting and learners have good opportunities to access high grades. Much assessor feedback provides clear advice to learners on how to improve,

particularly at foundation level. On some advanced level programmes written assignments are not challenging enough, assessor feedback is brief and not developmental. On adult and community learning programmes the process for recording and recognising performance and achievement (RARPA) is weak. Targets are insufficiently challenging, measurable or specific and learners' own targets are not monitored.

17. The use of technology to support learning is good in animal management and engineering. Teachers and learners make good use of the college's VLE. Many learners in these areas access the VLE from home. However, in other subject areas, as the college has identified, the use of technology is underdeveloped and restricted mainly to PowerPoint presentations. In equine management courses, staff do not capitalise on the benefits of using technology; for example, in analysing learners' riding skills and developing learners' information technology skills in coursework.
18. Provision of additional learning support for literacy and numeracy is good. Monitoring of learners' progress is mostly good. Useful monthly staff meetings identify at-risk learners and monitor action taken to support them. Promotion of equality and diversity through learning and assessment is satisfactory. The college acknowledges there is more work to do on this.
19. The college meets the needs and interests of learners well. Learners successfully progress through a wide range of provision from pre-entry level to HE. A wide range of activities, some of which are supported by additional project funding, have extended the opportunities provided for learners who might not otherwise participate in education. The college has excellent links with schools and provides successfully for school pupils aged 14 to 16 in addition to leading on the developments of the land-based and engineering diplomas.
20. The college meets the needs of employers exceptionally well. In addition to apprenticeships and employer-specific training, the college's Enterprise Development Hub supports the development of enterprise skills in the rural community. The college provides innovative bespoke training for a number of national employers. Specialist provision and resources in a number of curriculum areas benefit both learners and employers. Employers rate the provision provided by the college extremely highly.
21. Learners benefit from paid work experience in agriculture and engineering. These year-long opportunities provide essential employment skills and experience and are valued by learners and employers. The 'Learner Worker' programme allows learners to work for a wage in one of the college's commercial units. Learners have good opportunities to gain additional qualifications, including qualifications in sustainable development, which help them become more employable. Learners also enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities. However, not all learners benefit from these opportunities.

22. Partnerships, with schools, employers and community groups, are highly successful and of direct benefit to learners in a variety of ways. Partners report very positively on the flexible, enthusiastic and active way in which their needs are met. The college is very much at the heart of the local community and plays a key role in sustaining community networks and community groups. Learners from across the college are involved in a range of community activities.
23. Support for learners is good. The wide range of support services has a high profile and there are good links to appropriate external agencies. The referral process works well. The college operates an extensive, subsidised and well-organised transport scheme to enable learners to travel to college easily. Initial advice and guidance are good and are tailored to meet individual needs.
24. Initial assessment of learners is detailed and leads to early identification of additional support needs. Learners value this support and those in receipt of specialist support feel independent at college. Support is well managed and staff are well qualified. Learners value their induction to the college. Employers feel they are very well supported in recruiting apprentices.
25. Tutorial provision is good. The programme is underpinned by a 'Citizenship' framework which raises awareness of equality and diversity and sustainable development and which promotes healthy lifestyles. Individual tutorials take place regularly. However, the targets set for some learners are not sufficiently detailed and the actions needed to achieve them are not clear. Challenge for learners to achieve above their target grade is limited. There is insufficient promotion of equality and diversity through individual tutorials. The monitoring of apprentices' progress is good. Parents and employers are well informed about learners' progress. Communication between parents, employers and college is good.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

26. Leadership and management are good. Since the last inspection FE, HE and work-based learning provision have all grown significantly. The range of provision has widened and the college continues to play a major role regionally and nationally in the provision of specialist resources and expertise. The college maintains strong links with employers and regional bodies and uses the income, capital equipment and staff expertise gained to improve learners' experiences. The ambitious capital building plans noted at the last inspection have been largely realised and further impressive developments are currently taking place. The college gained outstanding grades in all aspects of the recent Framework for Excellence assessment and gained the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC's) Training Quality Standard parts A and B in 2009.
27. The college continues to benefit from inspirational leadership which aspires to excellence. Senior managers both support and challenge staff effectively. Communications within the college are good. The college's mission, vision and values are agreed by staff and well understood by staff and learners. Strategic planning and the setting of annual objectives are inclusive and take account of

national and regional priorities. Curriculum plans contribute effectively to the achievement of college objectives.

28. Governance is outstanding. Governors bring to the college a wide range of experience and exceptional expertise. They play an appropriate part in determining the direction of the college and monitoring its progress. Clerking arrangements are excellent and governors are provided systematically with a good range of reports. Governors offer an appropriate level of challenge to managers and use their expertise well, for example in their links with subject areas.
29. The arrangements for safeguarding learners are good. Statutory requirements are met. A senior manager takes overall responsibility and has been trained appropriately. Criminal Records Bureau checks have been completed on all college staff and the single central register is up-to-date. Appropriate arrangements are made to ensure learners are safe when undertaking work placement and work-based learning. Staff and governors receive appropriate training on safeguarding, the lead governor for safeguarding is qualified in safeguarding and safeguarding is included in learners' pastoral curriculum. Links with the Local Children's Safeguarding Board are close and appropriate action is taken when possible safeguarding issues are revealed. Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of learners are strong. Campus security is good and internet safety taken seriously.
30. Equality and diversity are embedded within the college's mission, vision and values and are promoted well. The college has a strong commitment to tackling discrimination, widening participation and supporting learners. The harassment and anti-bullying policies are rigorously applied. The equality and diversity committee regularly monitors the implementation of the single equality scheme and plan; it reviews learners' achievement data and other evidence to help ensure all groups are treated equally. This group takes action where evidence suggests a problem may exist. The college has identified, and inspectors agree, that the college needs to do more to promote equality and diversity in tutorials, in the planning and delivery of teaching and during the observation of teaching and learning. The college has appointed 30 equality and diversity champions in order to rectify this area for improvement.
31. The college's quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive. Course teams review courses annually, using a wide range of evidence. Curriculum self-assessment reports are largely accurate but the college's cross-college self-assessment report is overly positive. The process for observing and improving teaching and learning is insufficiently rigorous. Action plans are often not specific enough nor monitored sufficiently rigorously. The college has recently appointed a teaching and learning mentor to coordinate the work of subject learning coaches and others. The late enrolment of learners onto additional qualifications, at intermediate level, in 2008/09 means that comparisons against national benchmarks are misleading. Insufficient attention is paid to this during self-assessment and judgements on data are overly positive. Targets based on this data are not as challenging as intended.

32. The arrangements to involve learners, employers and staff in improving the provision are strong. Their views are evaluated carefully and action taken where needed. A sabbatical student president supports the student association and there are learner representatives on every course who meet monthly with senior managers, including the principal. Learners are represented on several college committees and focus groups. Employer liaison groups are established in curriculum areas and the principal meets regularly with employers and other representatives during a series of dinner meetings held during the year.
33. Financial management and control are outstanding. The college is in a strong financial position, helping it to implement building plans when expected funding did not materialise. The management information system provides a wide range of accurate reports which are helpful to managers. The new learning resource centre is well appointed and resourced. It is an attractive learning environment. There are sufficient computers for learners and classrooms are well equipped. Much of the teaching accommodation and learning resources are of high quality and none is less than satisfactory. Procedures to recruit, induct, and professionally develop staff are good. Staff are empowered but, as yet, are not sufficiently rigorous in the way they drive forward improvements. The college has introduced a management development programme to correct this. A recent benchmarking exercise against similar colleges shows that the college operates efficiently. The college provides good value for money.

Subject areas

Animal management

Grade 2

Context

34. The college offers a range of programmes from foundation through to advanced level, including a small number of evening classes for adults. Animal management provision covers a range of specialisms including working with exotic, farm and companion animals. Of the 513 learners on courses most are aged 16 to 18 and 362 are female. The college also offers work-based learning, bespoke industry training, HE and adult and community learning programmes.

Key findings:

- Success rates on most courses are high. Pass rates on many courses are 100%. Retention rates are low on the first diploma and the national award. Learners enjoy their courses.
- The standard of learners' work on foundation courses is good. Standards vary at intermediate and advanced level. In some cases learners' work is too basic, particularly at intermediate level and in some theory classes at advanced level.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use a wide range of activities in lessons and learners participate actively. Questioning is good in most lessons and learners contribute well to discussions. Tasks are too basic in a small number of lessons and some lessons lack pace. Some assignment work for first diploma learners is too easy.
- Teachers and learners make good use of the college's VLE. Many staff place learning materials, including handouts, video clips and schemes of work on it. Most learners access it regularly and they value the ability to access the VLE from home.
- Target setting for individual learners is satisfactory. The quality of learners' targets and the feedback they receive about their progress towards achieving them is inconsistent. Learners do not always understand the actions they need to take to improve.
- Assessment is good and well planned. All courses have clear assessment plans and these are available to learners on the VLE. Internal verification is good and feedback to assessors is constructive.
- Partnership working, including that with schools, is good. Animal management staff work well with employers who help and advise them to improve the curriculum and resources.
- The college is investing significantly in new resources. Construction of the new unit is underway and managed well to minimise disruption to learning. Currently the range of additional qualifications on offer is limited.
- Leadership and management of the animal management department are good. Strategic planning is good and the process is inclusive. Staff and managers

have a clear shared vision for future development. Communications are effective and managers keep thorough and meaningful records. Regular team meetings scrutinise the progress of learners. Managers provide support for underperforming teachers but there is little evidence of improvement.

- Self-assessment processes are inclusive and accurately identify key strengths and areas for improvement. Learners have a strong voice; they can identify examples where improvements have been made as a result of their feedback to staff.
- The management and promotion of equality and diversity are satisfactory but not sufficiently embedded into teaching and learning. There is no significant difference in the performance of different groups of learners. Learners feel safe on campus; they value the emphasis the college places on safeguarding. Health and safety processes are good and risk assessments rigorous. Staff and learners comply with health and safety processes.

What does Reaseheath College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the standard of tasks undertaken by first diploma learners in classes and in their assignment work to ensure an appropriate level of challenge.
- Improve target setting and progress monitoring to raise retention rates on some courses and to ensure learners understand how well they are performing and what they need to do to improve.
- Ensure that all staff identify appropriate opportunities in lessons and tutorials to promote learners' understanding of equality and diversity and deliver lessons at the appropriate pace.

Horticulture

Grade 2

Context

35. Currently, 133 learners are on programmes in horticulture and floristry offered at foundation, intermediate and advanced level. Around half of these learners are aged 16 to 18 and attend full-time programmes based at the college's horticultural unit. Approximately 25% are female and a very small number are from a minority ethnic background. The college also offers work-based learning, bespoke industry training, HE and adult and community learning programmes.

Key Findings:

- Success rates are high on most horticulture and floristry qualifications. However, success rates on the foundation horticulture certificate are low and retention is low on the national certificate in floristry. The standards achieved by learners in their practical and written work are good. Learners' achievement in regional and national skills competitions is impressive. Staff and learners are proud of their achievements.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lessons and schemes of work are well planned. Teachers use the results of initial assessment to plan teaching and support needs well. Learners are actively engaged in lessons. In some lessons teachers do not provide sufficient challenge for the most able learners. The use of technology to support learning is satisfactory.
- Assessment is good. Assessors carry out regular, comprehensive assessment of learners' work. Teachers make good checks on learning. Feedback on written work and following practical tasks is clear and provides useful guidance on how learners can improve. Internal verification is effective in improving assessors' performance.
- Initial advice and guidance are good. Potential learners and their parents receive realistic guidance about what the courses will entail. All learners have a comprehensive induction with good use of activities and team-building exercises. Learners, particularly adults who are returning to education and those living away from home for the first time, find the induction very helpful in settling into college life.
- Pastoral care and learning support are good. All learners complete initial diagnostic tests to identify areas where additional support is required. Learners value the effective additional learning support provided in-class and in the support workshops.
- Reaseheath responds well to the needs of learners and employers. Links between the college and nationally recognised companies are productive. Learners take part in product trials to provide research for manufacturers. The college is the preferred provider of vocational training for some national bodies such as the National Trust.

- Tutorials are satisfactory. Tutorials and individual learning plans (ILPs) contain effective targets for learners' academic progress but not for their personal development. The promotion and development of equality and diversity in tutorials and lessons is insufficient.
- Enrichment opportunities are good. Learners have good access to the cross-college activities. They value the Reaseheath 'experience'. Staff have developed a very good range of visits and study tours. Learners represent the college well in regional, national and world competitions.
- Resources and accommodation are satisfactory. The horticultural unit is well managed and is well resourced. The accommodation, glasshouses and floristry studios do not reflect modern industry practice but plans for their replacement are well advanced.
- Leadership and management are good. Course leaders are accountable for course performance against annually agreed college targets. They produce monthly reports which are used to monitor performance and plan actions to address shortfalls. Intervention is prompt where issues are identified.
- Reaseheath maintains good communications with employers. Industrial links are strong, with many staff engaged with a wide and diverse range of horticultural companies. There are strong links with the local community. Employer-based provision and full-cost courses have been developed in conjunction with both regional and national employers.
- Formal quality improvement structures are well developed and most quality assurance arrangements are robust. The team uses the views of employers and learners well. The curriculum team accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement during self-assessment but teaching and learning observations are insufficiently rigorous.

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Help learners reach their full potential by ensuring that teachers adapt learning activities and outcomes to challenge the more able learners, through more robust lesson observation and improved support for teachers.
- Improve learners' understanding of equality and diversity by improving their promotion within lessons and tutorials and ensuring all staff participate in training that updates their knowledge of equality and diversity to enable them to deliver this with confidence.

Equine management

Grade 2

Context

36. Currently 105 learners study on equine courses. Courses include first and national diploma, first and national certificate and national award options. Around 96% of learners are aged 16 to 18 and 91% are female. A further 30 learners attend courses through a partnership with Croft End Equestrian Centre near Oldham. Courses range from foundation to HE.

Key findings

- Success rates are high; on the national diplomas and the first diploma they are consistently high. However, in 2008/09 4 learners transferred from the first year of national diploma to the national award and 5 first diploma learners transferred to other qualifications..
- Too few learners achieve high grades. The college has identified this as an area for improvement, and inspectors agree. Action has been taken and the number of learners gaining distinctions in national diploma courses improved in 2008/09.
- Learners achieve a good range of additional qualifications to enhance employability. British Horse Society qualifications are integrated into full-time courses; pass rates are high at stages 1 and 2 but few learners enter for stage 3. Learners also take riding and road safety examinations. Achievement of key skills is good.
- Learners are well prepared for employment in the equine industry. They develop good practical skills. Learners are involved in realistic yard duties on a rota basis which enable them to develop their skills and competence. Second-year learners develop supervisory skills as team leaders. Learners are attentive and work diligently.
- Learners enjoy their programmes and appreciate the practical nature of the courses. Rigorous attention to health and safety is observed, learners feel safe and demonstrate a good awareness of safe working practices. There is good attention to safeguarding, which is valued by learners.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Practical teaching in the recently introduced additional support classes is good and helps learners to improve their practical skills and prepare for external examinations. Additional support sessions are available in all aspects of learning, including riding and horse care. Teachers use a wide range of methods to engage learners but too much teaching lacks pace and is insufficiently challenging. There are missed opportunities to use ILT effectively in learning.

- Much written assignment work lacks challenge and does not prepare learners on advanced courses for HE. Some assignments in the first part of the year are only set to achieve pass criteria. The quality of some assignment work is below standard, with little use of IT. Marked work has insufficient constructive comment to inform learners what they must do to improve. Assessment of practical skills is good.
- Personal support for learners is good and they receive considerable individual support and guidance from tutors. There is a coherent programme of group and individual tutorials. Tutors do not use individual tutorials effectively to help learners improve their performance on their courses. Action planning, target setting and performance monitoring are underdeveloped.
- Curriculum management is good, there is clear strategic planning and a focus on driving success. The recent restructure has been managed well. Teachers work well together and contribute to a range of measures to review and improve performance. Recent changes have focused successfully on improving learners' practical skills but insufficient attention has been paid to ensuring learners are fully challenged in their learning.
- Links with employers are good; learners benefit from work experience in a range of placements. Partnership working with Croft End Equestrian Centre in Oldham is good and has widened participation effectively. Management of these courses is good, with much sharing of best practice between the sites.
- Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity. They are treated with respect and are aware of what to do if they experience difficulties with others. The programme of group tutorials that features equality and diversity topics is good. However, there is little reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality and diversity in individual tutorials and in lessons.
- Resources to support courses in equine are good. The equine yard is managed well as a learning resource with a good range of horses. Staff have a wide range of vocational experience.

What does Reaseheath College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the standard of teaching and learning by improving lesson planning, adapting learning activities to better engage and challenge learners and improving the use of ILT.
- Increase the depth and rigour of assignment work to prepare learners more effectively to progress to HE.
- Improve action planning and target setting at tutorials to support all learners to reach their full potential and to achieve high grades.
- Improve the reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality and diversity in lessons and tutorials.

Engineering

Grade 1

Context

37. Provision is offered in vehicle and machinery service and repair. The college has developed programmes in partnership with many prestigious employers specialising in the land-based, construction plant, tool hire and motor vehicle industries. Currently 183 school pupils aged 14 to 16 are studying on young apprenticeship training, diploma programmes and a vocational opportunities programme. A further 181 learners aged 16 to 18 are following full-time foundation programmes; 60 are on intermediate and 121 on advanced programmes. Apprenticeship programmes deliver national diplomas in land-based technology to 163 learners. There are 91 Train to Gain learners on engineering and manufacturing technologies programmes.

Key findings:

- Success rates are high or very high on most programmes. In 2008/09 success rates were 94% on the first diploma and 91% on the national diploma in land-based technology. On most courses a high proportion of learners achieve high grades.
- Success rates within the agreed time period on Train to Gain courses, many of which are food manufacturing programmes, are high and improving. Employers value the competence of their apprentices and Train to Gain learners. Many apprentices progress to supervisory positions.
- Learners' work and attainment are good and often exceed the levels expected of them. Their practical skills are particularly good. Learners' contributions in lessons and their responses to written assessments are very mature. Many learners progress to higher-level courses.
- Learners, including work-based learners, enjoy their courses. Learners feel safe; they value the onsite security system. Full-time and part-time learners who attend on block release feel safe whilst in their accommodation. They have a good awareness of health and safety issues in working practices.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use an effective and varied range of techniques to motivate learners, who participate enthusiastically. Planned learning outcomes are shared with learners who receive positive and supportive feedback, which motivates and encourages them. Sustainable development is insufficiently embedded in the curriculum.
- Initial assessment identifies learners' learning styles and their support needs effectively. Literacy and numeracy support is good on all programmes. Induction is effective and promotes health and safety effectively.
- Monitoring of learners' progress is excellent. Individual tutorials are managed well and there is some excellent practice. The majority of learners are set challenging targets, their progress reviewed regularly and accurate records

kept. Regular, effective workplace reviews and strong target setting encourage work-based learners to achieve in the agreed timescale.

- The course offer is excellent. The department offers an extensive range of full- and part-time courses which enables learners from age 14 to progress through FE and into HE. The college has developed a range of innovative programmes in partnership with major employers. Progression between levels is good. The range of enrichment programmes are appropriate.
- Opportunities for school pupils aged 14 to 16 are excellent through the young apprenticeship programme, the foundation and intermediate diplomas and the NVQ foundation programme.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Self-assessment reports are largely accurate and managers have identified the main strengths and areas for improvement. Actions taken, including reorganisation of the management structure, have already improved the success rates of work-based learners. The teaching and practical facilities are excellent.
- The college has strong and well-established partnerships with prestigious employers. Reaseheath is the partner of choice for many important engineering companies. Learners benefit from these partnerships through the high quality resources, including tractors, forage harvesters and combine harvesters, which have been procured for teaching purposes and the expertise staff gain through high quality professional development.
- Equality and diversity are satisfactory. Schemes of work include equality and diversity but there is insufficient promotion of these in teaching and learning. In Train to Gain there is good promotion of equality and diversity particularly on food manufacturing programmes. However, there are very few female learners or learners from minority ethnic groups and the college does little to change this. Health and safety are well managed.

What does Reaseheath College need to do to improve further?

- Embed sustainability into the curriculum by identifying opportunities to introduce the environmental, ethical and social implications of engineering.
- Improve the promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum and develop strategies to attract more women and learners from minority ethnic groups to engineering.

Residential and welfare provision

Grade 2

Context

38. Residential accommodation is provided for up to 500 learners across two campus sites. Five halls of residence on the Reaseheath campus accommodate learners aged from 16 to 18. Some of the accommodation is allocated for learners who spend short periods of time in residence; for example, when they are caring for animals or part-time learners attending on block release. At the time of the inspection there were 33 female learners and 71 male learners aged 16 to 18 in residence. Male and female residents who are under 18 live in single sex accommodation.

Key findings

- The arrangements for meeting resident learners' health and welfare needs are good. Students are well supported by staff. Minor ailments and first aid are treated on site by trained staff. Arrangements with local health services are very good. Learners have a good choice of meals of appropriate quality from a range of outlets. The catering team caters well for most dietary needs and promotes healthy options. Learners have satisfactory arrangements to prepare food within their residential halls.
- Arrangements for assuring learners' safety are good. Resident learners feel safe and secure. Staff and learners understand and implement the college's anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies. The fire safety risk assessment is reviewed regularly. Residents are fully aware of the emergency evacuation procedures.
- The safeguarding of learners and vulnerable adults is managed effectively. The college's responses to allegations or suspicions of abuse meet the Local Safeguarding Children Board's guidance for protecting young people. College staff, contracted staff and adults resident on site are cleared through the Criminal Records Bureau process. On occasion there is a time lapse between adults becoming resident and their details being checked with the Criminal Records Bureau. The additional vetting procedures for college staff are consistently implemented.
- Learners make a strong contribution to the development of the residential services. The college values and encourages their involvement and they have confidence action will be taken. Residential learners play a lead role in the successful charity events. Learners know how to make a complaint and feel that their comments would be considered fairly. The complaints policy does not include Ofsted's contact details, as the current regulator for the college, and the complaints records lack detail.
- The college rewards and encourages positive behaviour. The disciplinary policy, which describes unacceptable behaviours, is well publicised and is implemented fairly. Where sanctions such as community activities are imposed on learners the college does not record them fully.

- Learners have very good personal support and guidance. They can access trained and experienced staff, including wardens, the welfare officers, chaplain and counsellor. Staff are easily accessible and learners are confident they will receive prompt, friendly and appropriate responses.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good and staff make very effective arrangements to meet the needs of individual residents. Induction arrangements are excellent. A highly organised 'fresher team' and learner ambassadors help learners settle in quickly. Learners receive good advice and support when they leave college.
- Wardens are deployed well and in sufficient number to provide a good level of supervision for residents. Wardens are visible around the campus. All hostels have suitable overnight supervision. The use of closed circuit television systems enhances the level of supervision, without compromising learners' privacy.
- Most areas of residential accommodation are reserved for the sole use of residential learners. Where non-residents have access to parts of buildings, resident learners have the use of a designated entrance. Halls of residence are generally well appointed but in older halls some fixtures and fittings are worn but functional. Shared bedrooms do not always provide adequate study facilities for occupants.
- The college provides a broad range of indoor and outdoor recreational and leisure facilities including a gym. These areas are well used by learners and are well managed and supervised.
- Wardens are well informed and supported in their residential duties. Staff development is good and communication within the team and with academic staff is good. All staff have an annual appraisal but the wardening aspect of their role is not clearly assessed.
- The college's residential policies and procedures are comprehensive and clearly written. The college provides clear information regarding the provision of residential accommodation and learners' support services to prospective learners and their advisers. The learner handbook is well written and provides useful and relevant information. The college maintains a robust reporting system for the leadership team's overview of risk management strategies, disciplinary actions, complaints and accidents within the college.

What does Reaseheath College need to do to improve the provision?

- Ensure that all adults who reside onsite but are not employed by the college are subject to clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau as their residence begins.
- Ensure that the disciplinary and complaints policies and the associated recording procedures comply with the national minimum standards.
- Improve the quality of bedrooms in older accommodation blocks to ensure that all learners have appropriate study space and the furniture and fittings meet the high standards of the newer hostels.

- Ensure that appraisal for student services staff includes all aspects of their role, particularly their residential work with young people.

Information about the inspection

39. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), two regulatory inspectors and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the college's vice principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
40. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Reaseheath College

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners	1464		1279	185	
Full-time learners	3107	312	104	1788	903
Part-time learners					
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	1				
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	2				
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	2				
Quality of provision	2	2	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	2	2	2	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1				
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	1				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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