

Lufton College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 131921

Name of lead inspector: Diane Stacey HMI

Last day of inspection: 30 April 2010

Type of provider: Independent specialist college

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Information about the provider

1. Lufton College is one of three further education colleges that form the Mencap National College. In October 2009 Mencap appointed a national manager for education with the remit to provide national strategic direction and expert leadership to the delivery of Mencap's post-16 provision. Lufton College is based on two sites on the rural outskirts of Yeovil. Established in 1969, it offers full-time residential education for learners aged 16–25 with a range of learning disabilities, from moderate to severe. These include autistic spectrum disorder, challenging behaviour, complex emotional behaviour and complex learning difficulties. Currently Lufton College has 100 residential learners and 10 who attend daily. Of all the learners, 67 are from within the South West region, with the remaining learners being referred from Connexions advisers and specialist schools in the South East and South Wales. Seventy one are male, 101 are over 19 years of age and six learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
2. The college offers three learning pathways: independence; employment; and community. In all of them the focus is on providing learners with individual programmes for learning and care. Learners have opportunities to achieve accredited qualifications and college certificates to recognise achievement. Vocational aspects of learners' programmes link to a range of work placements. The college's functional skills framework provides literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) support. Enrichment activities are offered both on site and within the community. Specialist support includes speech and language, occupational therapy, music therapy, counselling and educational psychology support. The college's mission is 'Preparing learners for the next stage of their lives'.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: Further education (16 to 18)	12 full-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	100 full-time learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3

Overall effectiveness

3. The college's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The college's satisfactory capacity to improve is demonstrated by its steady progress since the last inspection to improve weaknesses. Learners enjoy their learning and develop work-related skills very well. They make satisfactory progress into supported living and further education or employment when they leave college. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Very effective use is made of partnerships with a local further education college and with community organisations. Learners are able to choose from a satisfactory range of vocational and academic activities that meets their interests and aspirations. The care, guidance and support learners receive are satisfactory and are particularly good for work placements. While leadership and management are satisfactory, managers do not have a sufficiently systematic approach to monitoring to ensure that all potential improvements to learners' experiences are clearly identified and acted on. Safeguarding arrangements and the promotion of equality and diversity are satisfactory, although managers do not analyse and use data about learners' activities fully enough.

Main findings

- Learners enjoy their time at the college and make satisfactory progress in achieving their targets and external awards. The development of employability skills, though, is good. Learners progress satisfactorily when they leave college, although this is not always clearly recorded. Tracking of learners' progress has improved since the last inspection.

- Learners feel safe and develop good health and safety practices in the workplace. However, the college needs to monitor safe practices in the classroom more effectively.
- Learners participate in a wide range of community activities, helping to raise both local and national organisations' awareness of disability.
- Initial and baseline assessments are thorough and informative. Support for developing learners' literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. Learners engage well in the better lessons. However, in too many lessons there is insufficient challenge to more able learners and lesson planning is inadequate. Verbal communication with learners is not always age appropriate.
- The range of provision offered through the new pathways programmes satisfactorily meets the needs of learners. The range and number of work experience placements are particularly good.
- Support, care and guidance are satisfactory. Transition arrangements have improved significantly. Job coaches support learners within their work placements very well.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has faced significant challenges in recent years. Mencap's national manager for education has worked successfully to help develop the strategic direction of the college and to restructure staff to deliver the new curriculum offer more effectively. Plans for a new college advisory board are still to be implemented.
- The college has diversified well in the last year and responded appropriately to government and local priorities. It has developed good partnerships to complement other college provision in the area and has made good links with the local authority. Partnerships with schools, colleges, employers and community organisations benefit learners particularly well.
- Engagement with users is satisfactory. There is an active student council. The members are vocal in their views about things that need improving and the college responds well to their suggestions. However, learners and employers are not sufficiently involved in the development of the curriculum.
- The college's quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. There is a clear and detailed quality improvement cycle that encompasses all aspects of the learners' experiences. However, the monitoring of the quality improvement cycle and related activities is not approached systematically enough, as it is not always clear whether the activities have been carried out.
- The college has satisfactory arrangements to ensure the safeguarding of learners. Learners feel safe. Risk assessments are extensive for all environments and activities experienced by learners.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Data are collected but not sufficiently analysed or used. Not all staff have received updated equality and diversity awareness training.

What does Lufton College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the identification and recording of learners' destinations to provide managers with more accurate information about outcomes.
- Improve the monitoring arrangements of health and safety practices within the classroom to ensure that staff and learners adhere strictly to college guidelines.
- Improve the planning of lessons to ensure that the specific needs of all learners are accurately identified and recorded and that all learners are set appropriately challenging targets that meet their individual needs.
- Continue to improve the new pathways programmes to ensure successful outcomes for learners.
- Continue the process of developing a college advisory board in order to ensure there is a strong local focus on the college's work.
- Develop arrangements to involve learners, employers and stakeholders in the development of the curriculum.
- Adopt a more systematic approach to the monitoring of quality improvement activities, including the use of data, to make improvements.
- Arrange for all staff to have updated equality and diversity training to increase their level of awareness and assist them in planning and promoting it better within the curriculum, including better use of age-appropriate language by teaching staff.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- being army cadets
- the range of work experience
- the help with disabilities
- developing independence skills
- the good and helpful staff
- playing football
- living with friends
- learning to read.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the decoration of the accommodation
- the time allocated for practical art and craft
- the time to get involved in more sports
- the number of computers

- the extent of one-to-one help about relationships
- the amount of free time
- the timing of external work experience, which they would like to have sooner.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the good relationship with the college
- the well-structured arrangements for the work placements
- the thoroughness in checking health and safety issues
- the support for learners while on work placement
- the very good communication
- the development that learners make during work placements.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the information about what learners are doing at the college
- the degree of challenge for the learner while on placement
- the continuity of support from the college for learners
- the punctuality of the learners to work placements.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

4. The college's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory and they make satisfactory progress to independent living, employment and further education when they leave the college. Mencap and senior managers have developed a clear vision and strategic direction for the college and they are setting realistic targets for improving provision. The quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory but the college is not systematic enough in the monitoring of quality improvement activities. The views of learners and stakeholders have been used well to improve provision but they are not sufficiently involved in the development of the curriculum. The self-assessment report is largely accurate in its grading but some key judgements are not identified. Development plans at course level are detailed and used well by staff to bring about improvement but the whole-college development plan lacks sufficient detail.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

5. Learners enjoy their time at college and make satisfactory progress in achieving their targets and external awards. There is no difference in the achievements of different groups of learners. The recording of learners' progress has improved since the last inspection. Learners progress satisfactorily when they leave college, although the identification and recording of outcomes need further development to provide more accurate information.
6. Learners develop their economic and social well-being well through the variety of contexts provided by the college, both on campus and in the community. Their understanding of the world of work develops well through the college's vocational programmes and work-experience placements. Learners develop good employability skills, which are celebrated by an evening with employers to recognise learners' achievements.
7. Learners feel safe and have a satisfactory understanding of how to keep safe at college and in the community, including travelling independently and during work placements. However, health and safety practices are not always strictly adhered to within the classroom. Learners have a satisfactory awareness of healthy lifestyles and make informed choices about their own health and well-being. They respond satisfactorily to the encouragement they receive to eat well and they engage in a wide range of physical activities.
8. Learners engage with their local communities well, particularly those who live in college-rented properties in local villages. They join local sports clubs and groups and help in raising awareness about disabilities through projects with police and dentistry students.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

9. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Thorough initial and baseline assessments are used well to identify learners' starting points, targets and destinations. However, this information does not always effectively inform teaching and learning plans and lessons. Identification and recording of progress made against personalised targets in lessons are satisfactory, as well as those observed through informal settings. Staff are suitably qualified or are on appropriate training courses. In better lessons, learners' skills are developed well and reinforced through practical tasks. Highly effective use of directed questioning helps learners develop speaking and listening skills, as well as encouraging them to make choices. Verbal feedback to learners about their progress is clear and supportive during lessons and in the workplace, following assessments. More able learners, though, are not sufficiently challenged. Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills are sometimes missed. Inappropriate use is made of symbols with learners who would be more constructively developing reading skills through standard text. The tone and language used by staff is not always appropriate for the age of learners.
10. Technology is used confidently by teaching staff and learners. However, not all classrooms have interactive whiteboards or sufficient numbers of computers. Tutor-generated materials are good and wall displays are well presented. Accommodation is satisfactory, although some rooms are cramped and some practical workshops lack natural light.
11. The quality of provision meets learners' needs and interests satisfactorily. Learners select from an appropriate range of activities to meet their interests and needs. Personalised timetables provide options that include life and work skills, and creative, therapeutic and communication activities. Learners engage in and enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities. The extensive choice of work-placement opportunities is particularly good. Numbers of learners participating in work experience have increased significantly over the past few years, as has the number of employer placements.
12. The very effective partnerships with schools, local colleges, employers and community organisations benefit learners particularly well by increasing opportunities to participate in the community and extend their social and work skills. Access to local further education colleges increases opportunities for learners. The college-run tearoom provides a useful meeting place for a range of local groups, including rambler groups and the Women's Institute, as well as providing a venue to display work from local artists.
13. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Recently improved pre-entry and induction processes help learners settle more quickly into college. Support for speech and language therapy has greatly increased since the last inspection. Support in lessons is appropriate, although not all support staff are directed sufficiently well. Transition arrangements for when learners leave college have improved significantly. Support for learners in work placements is particularly

good. Two full-time job coaches work very effectively to plan and provide highly effective support for learners.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

14. In the face of significant challenges in recent years, Mencap's national manager for education has worked successfully with senior managers to help develop the strategic direction of the college and restructure the middle management to better deliver the new curriculum offer. The college's detailed business plan identifies realistic targets for all strands of the college's work except for outcomes. The college has diversified well in the last year and responded appropriately to government and local priorities. It has developed good partnerships to complement other college provision in the area and has made effective links with the local authority.
15. A board of trustees satisfactorily oversees all Mencap's work and an education and learning sub-committee of the main board oversees the work of the college. Since the inception of the sub-committee there has been a strong focus on the quality of provision. A college advisory board is planned to provide a strong local focus on the college's work.
16. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory and meet government legislative requirements. A new safeguarding, care and behaviour team is established. All staff, volunteers and contract workers are registered with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and a central record is well maintained. Local further education college staff and sole employers are monitored well and the college ensures they are appropriately vetted. Training for all staff is regularly planned and implemented. Policies and procedures adequately inform staff about how to handle the disclosure of abuse. An antibullying and e-safety policy is in place.
17. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to comply with legislative requirements. A single equality scheme and action plans are implemented. Adequate monitoring takes place to ascertain learners' understanding of equality and diversity. However, equality and diversity is not consistently well planned and reinforced within the curriculum and neither is it a standard agenda item for management group meetings. While new staff complete initial training during induction, the college has been slow to provide updated training for all staff. Procedures for dealing with incidents and complaints are satisfactory.
18. While the college satisfactorily collates information about the performance of different groups of learners it does not sufficiently analyse and use data. The proportion of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low, as is the percentage of staff who declare a disability. The college has taken action to encourage staff to declare disabilities and managers have had training in disability disclosure.

19. Engagement with learners, parents and carers is satisfactory. Feedback from learners is directed through a range of channels and they have direct access to the principal if an issue is not resolved. Managers respond well to suggestions made by the active student council. Feedback from parents, carers and employers is systematically gathered and analysed and actions taken to make improvements. However, they are not yet involved in the development of the curriculum.
20. The college's quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. A clear and detailed quality improvement cycle encompasses all aspects of the learners' experiences. However, it is not always clear whether activities have been carried out. The college is starting to use data to identify underperforming areas but the analysis and use of data is not thorough and systematic. There is a sharper focus on the quality of teaching and learning and results from observations are analysed and used well to plan and deliver staff training to help improve teaching and learning. Learning support staff are now observed as part of the process but too few observations have taken place this year.
21. The self-assessment process is inclusive of staff, learners and stakeholders. The report, although broadly accurate in its grading, lacks detail and some significant judgements have not been identified. The overall quality improvement plan lacks detail but plans are more detailed at course level and used well by staff to monitor and improve provision.
22. Value for money is satisfactory. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Learners make satisfactory progress at college and into employment and other training. Resources, including staffing, accommodation and facilities, are satisfactory and meet the needs of learners.

Information about the inspection

23. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider'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.
24. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed . They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Lufton college

Learning types: 16–18 Learner responsive: FE full-time courses, 19+ responsive: FE full-time courses;

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16–18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	110	9	101
Part-time learners	0		
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3		
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3		
How well do learners progress?	3		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
How safe do learners feel?	3		
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	3		
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	2		
Quality of provision	3	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3		
Leadership and management	3	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3		
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	3		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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