

Condover College

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates		16-18 October 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Teaching and assessment is not yet consistently good. While the college has improved the quality of lessons steadily over time, teaching has not improved quickly enough.
- The college has had too many changes in leadership in the last four years and this has resulted in a lack of stability for staff. Consequently, this has contributed to slowing the rate of progress made in improving important areas of the college's work.
- The range of timetabled subjects and additional activities to improve learners' work-related skills and build on skills for independence, while increasing, is still too narrow.
- The progress learners make is not always maximised because they are not given enough opportunities or time in lessons to practise what they are learning using real life scenarios.
- The steps required to improve the college's work, that are accurately identified by the newly appointed head of education and senior team, are being put firmly in place but it is too early to see the full effect of these actions.
- Managers and the governing body have not ensured that all areas of the college's work, such as how well all groups of students achieve, are reviewed and reported in enough detail in order to help the college make further improvements swiftly.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Learners enjoy their time at college and get on well with each other and with staff.
- The college seeks the views of learners and parents and carers frequently and uses this feedback well to help improve the learner experience at Condoover.
- Personal support for learners in lessons is good. Staff treat learners sensitively, discreetly and with respect which allows them to express their choices effectively and take a more active part in activities.
- The college ensures learners feel safe and they receive particularly good attention and support from staff when facing new situations and places. As a result, learners can adapt to unfamiliar settings quickly.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good or better lessons more rapidly by ensuring learners' tasks within lessons relate closely to the skills they need to develop in real life and that enough opportunities and time are given in lessons to emphasise and reinforce what students are learning before moving on to another activity.
- Strengthen the college's process for checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that managers gain an accurate view of teaching and can direct individual staff development and training more effectively. Managers need to ensure all observer feedback to teachers is precise, detailed and prioritised so that teachers and support staff are clear about exactly how they can improve their practice. In addition, the college needs to ensure any broad themes identified through observations are evaluated rigorously to help plan further improvement.
- To increase the progress learners make in their personal and social development and functional skills by ensuring teachers more effectively plan to take account of learners' abilities and long-term goals, and undertake activities that will develop and extend the real life skills learners will need for their future. This can be strengthened by systematically sharing information about learners' learning objectives and achievements more swiftly between the college and the residences. Additionally, teachers should review and record more clearly how learners can best develop these skills in ways that are more meaningful.
- To extend the range of subjects and activities available to support learners' work-related, functional and independence skills and expand their experience of real life situations and settings. The college can improve this by forging more links with the community and external organisations to increase the opportunities for external work experience; providing more chances within Condover for learners to have vocational tasters; and by increasing the opportunity for all learners to take part in a wider array of daytime enrichment.
- To increase the governing body's scrutiny of the college's performance by ensuring the education committee reviews college performance more routinely and that governors ask more challenging questions of managers so they can be assured of the rate of improvement being made against targets. In addition, ensure reports to the governing body, including reports on equalities, are sufficiently detailed and presented in an easy-to-interpret format.
- To sharpen quality assurance processes and the use of data further so managers can better measure the impact of their actions. This can be achieved by reducing the over reliance on paper-based systems so information is exchanged quickly, using trend data much better through self-assessment and by ensuring improvement plans focus sharply on the college's key priorities.
- Ensure staff use up-to-date assistive technologies, including communication aids, where appropriate to support learning in lessons.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Outcomes for learners need improvement. Overall, learners make reasonable progress in relation to their starting points and learning goals. Teachers, however, do not sufficiently identify, record or review the progress learners make in their social and personal skills development. As a result, it is difficult to measure fully the advances learners make in developing these skills over time. Overall, learners make good gains in confidence and improve their self-esteem.

- Increasing numbers of learners are successful in gaining qualifications across all subject areas. The overall amount of external awards achieved has improved since the introduction of foundation level qualifications in 2010/11. These awards effectively relate to the individual learner's medium- and long-term goals.
- Most learners improve their communication skills progressively and are successful at making known their choices. Learners develop a greater sensory awareness that helps them to express their feelings, including their likes and dislikes. They learn to cope with the pressures faced when being introduced to new people and to different and unfamiliar places. As a result, learners behave more appropriately in social settings such as pubs and restaurants, during visits to shops and whilst accessing community leisure activities.
- Learners' work-related skills require improvement. Learners that are more able develop their business skills well through a young enterprise qualification. All learners are set learning objectives for functional skills but these do not yet sufficiently link to the development of their long-term independence skills. For example, learners do not have sufficient opportunities to practise these skills in real situations to give the use of English or mathematics meaning and relevance, such as recognising the shape of a circle to identify a pound coin and then enabling a learner to shop with it.
- College data show little variation in outcomes relating to gender and ethnicity, as well as between different ability groups and day and residential learners. The college has only recently compiled these data and they are not reported or reviewed comprehensively through the college's self-assessment arrangements to determine if any gaps are reducing or widening over time.
- Attendance and retention rates are high. Most learners arrive on time for sessions and enjoy activities arranged by teachers, especially those which require their active participation.
- The vast majority of learners remain within the organisation at the end of their learning programmes for long-term community residential care. One student who left in July 2012 attends a further education course at a local college. Through highly individualised planning, learners access a wide range of activities within residences that enhances their enjoyment and enables them to continue to develop their personal and social skills within the wider community.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because not enough teaching is consistently good or better. The college has been successful in notably reducing the proportion of inadequate teaching and reducing the variability in teachers' assessment and recording of learners' progress. Teachers' planning of lessons has improved but it does not yet ensure all activities are designed at the right level for learners or are sufficiently meaningful to help extend and reinforce the skills that learners need to know and learn to support their future lives.
- Teaching in better lessons is lively and interesting with tailored planning for learners and enjoyable group activities that help learners make progress. Learning is at its best when it includes real practical tasks that also develop learners general day-to-day skills and dexterity through hands-on activities such as filling buckets with water and feeding animals at local stables.
- In less effective lessons, teachers do not consider learners' different learning goals well enough and therefore plan activities that are sometimes far too ambitious. They do not always allow learners time to continue with an activity that they are clearly enjoying and learning from.
- The use of technology to support learning is improving but is not maximised to its potential. In a few lessons, teachers use well-chosen video clips of music and dance to bring diversity into classrooms and employ interactive whiteboards imaginatively to extend learners' progress. Learners needing communication aids do not always have enough access to up-to-date digital technology to help further enhance their independent communication skills.

- Arrangements for establishing learners' starting points are thorough and effective. Following an initial one-day visit to the college, learners spend their first half-term being observed in lessons by all teachers to build up a full picture of their existing skills, interests and sensitivities. Staff then devise a comprehensive individual learning programme with advice on communication strategies from experienced speech and language therapists before deciding on learners' first learning goals.
- The setting of individual learning goals overall requires improvement. In many lessons, learning objectives are clear, manageable, relevant to learners' lives and frequently updated but a minority of learners have targets that do not completely suit them. For example, one learner has a target to make eye contact with increasing numbers of learners without considering his current real incapacity to manage contact with more than two at most.
- Teachers' checking of learners' progress is mostly effective. Teachers and support staff give encouraging verbal feedback to learners during lessons and provide regular reviews to parents and carers to give a picture of learners' progress. These reviews, however, do not capture well enough learners' successes in their personal, social and independence skills, particularly those learnt in their residences, to give a full picture of everything that they achieve. The assembling of this information is often hindered by an overreliance on paper-based recording of learners' achievement across sites.
- Much support in lessons is very effective with well-informed teachers and high numbers of support staff giving learners individual attention and ensuring that they take part in activities and make at least reasonable progress. In several instances teachers use a range of methods skilfully to manage behaviour and reduce learners' anxiety, thereby preventing frustration. However, teachers do not always change activities when learners, particularly but not exclusively those with very complex needs, clearly indicate that they have reached the end of what they can manage. A few support staff need directing and coaching by teachers during lessons which detracts from the learners' experience.
- Information, advice and guidance is adequate. Arrangements to introduce new learners to the college are good. The advice on the college's own residential provision for learners and their families after the end of their education programmes is also good but the college does not yet provide enough experiences or information about other potential destinations.
- Equality and diversity are very effectively promoted through staff helping learners to have a positive view of themselves and by the respect with which learners are treated. The appointment of significantly more male staff to support young men with seriously challenging behaviour has made participation in college education possible for some learners for the first time. However, a few staff use over-emphatic voices in speaking to learners or speak about learners rather than to them.
- Staff pay good attention to health and safety with thorough individual risk assessments for specific activities, particularly outside college. For example, during a work experience taster at local stables, support staff focused on wheelchair security on any uneven ground, on providing extra support for learners walking downhill and appropriately emphasising the wearing of helmets at all times.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The college's head of education and the senior education team know the areas that require improvement and are acutely aware of the need to speed up the rate of this improvement, particularly in teaching and learning. Prioritised actions are well underway but it is too early to judge the full effectiveness of these on improving learners' outcomes. Despite an extended period of discontinuity in college leadership, staff morale is high.
- The governing body oversees the work of the college adequately. Governors review Condoover's finances prudently although their scrutiny of learners' achievement and educational experience

is less rigorous. The reports and data given to governors are not always detailed enough to enable them to ask challenging questions of managers in order to gauge and stimulate the rate of improvement.

- Improved staff training and more effective management reviews of staff performance have enabled the college to reduce the number of inadequate lessons and teachers now have a more consistent approach to planning their lessons. As a result, most learners make at least reasonable progress from their starting points. Actions taken by managers have increased the proportion of appropriately qualified staff significantly but have not yet ensured that enough teaching is consistently good.
- Managers review the quality of lessons frequently. The usefulness of feedback given by college observers to help teachers improve varies. In a minority of cases, observer feedback does not provide a clearly prioritised list of actions that will help teachers extend students' learning in future lessons but instead focuses on less crucial issues like teachers' paperwork. The introduction of peer observations is helping teachers to share ideas and has been welcomed by staff.
- The college's self-assessment procedures effectively identify what the college needs to do to improve. Quality assurance processes have led to steady improvements in many areas of the college's work, such as increasing the promotion of equality and diversity. Managers' actions following self-assessment have been insufficiently effective in ensuring all improvements have been rapid enough.
- Managers use data better than at the last inspection to inform decisions and review performance. Currently the overreliance on paper-based systems for tracking learners' progress across the residential houses has meant the college has not always captured and used this information sufficiently quickly. This issue is identified in the college's self-assessment and plans are in place this term to improve management information and the production of timely reports on learner achievement.
- The range of subjects and extra activities that make up learners' timetables has improved but still requires further development. Staff are more skilled and adept at improving communication skills with learners. The introduction of topics such as story telling are increasing the opportunities learners have to express themselves. Managers are aware that the current design of the curriculum does not yet enable learners to fully extend and progress their independence and work-related skills as much as it could.
- Opportunities for internal and external work experience remain a key area for further improvement. A well-established enterprise initiative run in conjunction with a national young enterprise organisation has successfully allowed more able learners to experience a range of business skills, such as basic money management, customer service and marketing. Work-related options and topics for all learners, although increasing, remain limited.
- The college seeks the views of learners and parents and carers frequently and uses this feedback very well to help improve learners' experience. Learners now regularly present their views at governing body meetings and their feedback is sought routinely before the appointment of new staff. Learners' views have also been strengthened through the student council. For example, a request for more outside space has led to a picnic and play area being created alongside the main college building.
- Through specific staff and governor training, the college has successfully increased staff awareness of equality and diversity themes. The improved promotion of equality has resulted in better use of learning resources in many lessons, for example ensuring images on film clips and other learning materials challenge stereotypes and draw attention to role models with disabilities, such as paralympians. Specific actions by the college to ensure its staff profile reflects its learner community more closely have proved very successful, with a notable increase in the proportion of male staff and staff of minority ethnic heritage.
- The analysis, review and reporting of the performance of different groups of learners to ensure that any achievement gaps are narrowed is insufficient. The college does not present equalities

data over time or in way that enables managers or the governing body to see easily whether all gaps in achievement are closing or widening.

- Managers have improved the quality of classrooms and décor at the Grafton Centre. They recognise more investment is required to enhance the facility further and improve the range of specialist assistive technologies, such as bespoke communication aids, to help students learn more effectively. The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Condover College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work-based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	3			3					
Outcomes for learners	3			3					
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3			3					
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3			3					

Provider details

Condover College	
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 23
	Part-time: 1
CEO / Head of Education	Mr Stephen McGill / Ms Tracy Gillett
Date of previous inspection	June 2009
Website address	The college has no website

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	N/A	22	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Additional socio-economic information

Condover College Limited (CCL) is registered as an industrial and provident society and has charitable status. It is a small independent specialist college in Shropshire providing for learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learners undertake an entry level programme of education for two or three years designed to develop their communication, independence, functional, vocational and personal skills. In total, eight learners attend on a day basis and 17 are residential. One learner is of minority ethnic heritage. The college's residential accommodation is located a few miles away in community-based homes at Condover, Pontesbury, Baschurch, Bicton, Shrewsbury and Bowmere Heath. In addition to the 22 learners funded by the Education Funding Agency (EFA), two learners are funded by social services and one is funded by the Welsh Assembly.

Since the last inspection, the college has had four heads of education. The college's board of management appointed the current head of education in September 2012.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the head of education as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and parents; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and work experience. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision.

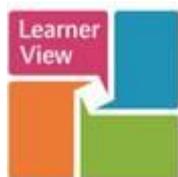
What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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