

# Condover College

## Inspection report

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

#### Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

#### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

## Description of the provider

1. Condover College Limited is a small independent specialist residential college with charitable status and provides education for learners aged 19 to 25 with severe and complex learning difficulties, including sensory impairment, communication and behavioural difficulties. Condover College became independent of the RNIB in 2004 and moved into new premises in November 2007. The college is located in the village of Grafton, approximately four miles from Shrewsbury and now has a very different focus and senior management team since the last inspection. There are 16 learners funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and of these, two attend on a daily basis; a further cohort of 12 residents are funded by social services. Residential accommodation is provided in small, community- based homes. Condover College provides 'life long' provision; nearly all learners who complete their formal education return to Condover residential services on a permanent basis. Residents who have moved to long-term provision also access the educational services at the college.
2. The curriculum includes access to a range of courses and modules which include: Skills for Life; dough craft; cultural art; 3D decoupage; glass painting, multi-sensory; information and communication technology (ICT); creative arts; speaking out; independent living skills; survival cookery; and managing money. The college mission states: 'Condover College Limited will, by a programme of individually designed quality education, enable learners to acquire the necessary skills for them to pursue their aspirations and dreams, and by quality support, promote their fulfilment of those aspirations and dreams'.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Inadequate: Grade 4
Capacity to improve	Inadequate: Grade 4
Achievement and standards	Inadequate: Grade 4
Quality of provision	Inadequate: Grade 4
Leadership and management	Inadequate: Grade 4
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Inadequate: contributory grade 4</i>

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Inadequate: Grade 4

3. The level of achievement and quality of learners' work is inadequate. The college does not have an adequate picture of learners' achievement over time and has yet to effectively implement the framework for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA). Progress in relation to life skills and communication is poorly captured. Learners' behaviour and emotional development is good; this results from the strong caring ethos of the college.
4. Teaching and learning are inadequate. The limited specialist teaching expertise of staff results in a significant number of unsatisfactory aspects of teaching and learning. Too many learner targets are not specific nor do they adequately relate back to the outcomes of assessment. There is minimal use of communication strategies to support the many learners with complex needs. The management of learners' behaviour is effective and links with parents and carers are good.
5. The college's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners and its approach to educational and social inclusion are inadequate. The college has yet to establish a clear well monitored overall curriculum framework. Access to relevant and meaningful external accreditation is underdeveloped. Community presence and participation are good. At nearly a quarter of its population, the college has a high proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds.
6. Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. A high level of care is well established and includes comprehensive personal care plans and person-centred planning which provide clear guidance on individual needs. Learner induction and tutorial support are effective. Behaviour management and advocacy services are good. Learners feel safe and individual risk assessments are comprehensive and detailed. The provision for speech and language specialist interventions is insufficient.
7. Leadership and management are inadequate. The strong emphasis on providing good quality care does not extend sufficiently to meeting learners' educational needs. Neither the board nor the senior management team are sufficiently rigorous in their monitoring of the quality of the educational provision. Self-assessment is ineffective and fails to identify the key areas for improvement; data are not used systematically. Staff communication and day-to-day operational arrangements are satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is inadequate. The college provides inadequate value for money.

Capacity to improve

Inadequate: Grade 4

8. The college shows inadequate capacity for further improvement. Learners' achievement and standards, teaching and learning and the curriculum are all unsatisfactory. The college has a limited understanding of its own strengths and areas for improvement; self-assessment is weak and fails to identify some key

areas for improvement, particularly in leadership and management. Quality assurance systems and actions to promote improvement have not been sufficiently timely and have not led to the progress required. The lesson observation system fails to yield a realistic view of the quality of teaching and learning. The professional development programme is satisfactory. Strategic management is weak.

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

9. The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection are inadequate. Condover College changed ownership in 2004 and many of the key issues for improvement at the last inspection remain unresolved and some strengths or satisfactory areas are now areas for improvement. Individual learning plans remain underdeveloped and target setting is now inadequate. Risk assessments are comprehensive and detailed. The quality assurance arrangements remain underdeveloped and the observation of teaching and learning is inadequate in identifying poor performance and in promoting improvement. The proportion of staff with specialist teaching expertise is insufficient. Action planning for equal opportunities legislation remains underdeveloped. Leadership and management now have significant areas for improvement.

#### Key strengths

- good access to advocacy services for learners
- good personal care and support
- good attention paid to creating a safe and secure environment.

#### Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- the accuracy and precision of target setting
- the links between assessment, target setting and lesson planning
- the specialist teaching expertise of staff
- the rigour of curriculum framework
- the quality improvement processes
- the strategy for implementing a total communication environment
- the rigour of monitoring of the educational provision by the board.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Inadequate: Grade 4

10. Achievement and standards are inadequate. The college does not have an adequate picture of learners' achievement over time. The self-assessment report overestimates the progress of its learners, although it did accurately identify that assessment and recording systems are weak. The college has yet to effectively implement the framework for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA). Pre-entry multidisciplinary assessments are comprehensive but outcomes do not sufficiently inform individual education learning plans. Baseline assessments are not always specific and do not provide adequate detailed information upon which to develop precise and meaningful individual learning targets; those that are set are not rigorously monitored. Staff do not, therefore, have a clear understanding of what learners can do, either as the starting point for further learning, or adequately identify their needs in relation to moving to the next stage of their life. Learners generally meet their individual targets, but these are often too general to be meaningful and are not always sufficiently challenging. Examples of targets include 'to behave sensibly for a whole lesson' and another was 'to show understanding of a question'. The college acknowledge this as an area for improvement. Learner progress in relation to life skills and communication is often poorly captured, with insufficient emphasis on the standard of work or the skills developed.
11. Learners enjoy their time at college; the majority participate well in lessons. They develop an awareness of the skills they need to behave more appropriately and their emotional development is good; this results from the strong caring ethos of the college. Learners' awareness of health and safety issues in relation to the activities they undertake is good. The celebration of learner achievement is satisfactory overall; for example, through in-house certificates, end of year events and photographic displays around the college. However, learners' progress is not sufficiently recognised through an appropriate range of external awards. All but one of the learners who have left the college provision over the past four years have continued to attend Condover residential services and returned to access college provision again. Attendance and retention rates are good, as expected for a specialist college.

### Quality of provision

Inadequate: Grade 4

12. Teaching and learning are inadequate. The college has overestimated the quality of this aspect of its provision in the self-assessment report. A high proportion of staff do not have an adequate understanding about how to develop the communication skills of learners with complex needs or to fully implement a consistent and total communication environment. As a consequence there is a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching and learning. Minimal use is made of communication aids or signing to support learners. There is an over-emphasis on whole class teaching and insufficient differentiation; leading to the poor match between learner needs and activities in lessons.

13. Too many activities are taught in a classroom context in groups that also include social services funded learners. Lessons sometimes fail to engage all learners. Individual targets are incorporated into lesson plans and are shared with learners at the start of lessons. However, too many targets are not specific nor do they adequately relate back to the outcomes of assessment. In one lesson a learner was expected to practice signing yet no member of staff used signing to communicate with the group.
14. The quality of lesson plans is variable and in many instances plans are insufficiently detailed with regard to the learning outcomes for individuals. There is limited planning for sequential learning and whilst staff do formally review progress with learners at the end of each lesson, the process lacks rigour and is not effectively used to assist with the planning of future lessons. Individual learning plans are not comprehensive nor are they effectively revised to ensure that information contained within specialist reports, such as those devised by speech and language therapists, is acted upon. Similarly, the daily records that are kept are too general. They focus too much on describing the activities the learners have completed, rather than the learning that has taken place.
15. Whilst literacy and numeracy targets are embedded across college provision they are not yet fully integrated within all learning activities. The use of ICT to support learning is underdeveloped. Staff know learners well and learners feel happy and trust the staff. There is effective management of learners' behaviour focusing on positive reinforcement.
16. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners is inadequate. The self-assessment report overestimated the quality of this area. Condover College has yet to establish a well planned robustly monitored overall curriculum to develop the skills of young adults in a further education (FE) context and prepare them for moving on for the next stage of their life. Instead, individual learners' programmes lack coherence and have been built around a mix of courses and unrelated modules of work. This does not provide an adequate framework for progression but is based mainly on learner choice as opposed to what they need to learn. Access to relevant and meaningful external accreditation is underdeveloped. The range of enrichment activities is satisfactory. Two learners attend the local general FE college for a full day and these placements have been successful in enabling the learners to practice and transfer their personal skills in another context. Staff regularly reinforce the concept of the safe learner and pay good attention to the promotion of health and safety issues. Learners have good access to nutritional advice and sports opportunities. Risk assessments are comprehensive and detailed. Learners are successfully encouraged to express their views through well structured meetings with external advocates. Examples of learners' positive contribution to the community include a recycling project. Economic well-being is adequately encouraged; for example, through money management and work placements. Appropriate adult and FE-focused language is not sufficiently promoted.

17. The college's response to social and educational inclusion is inadequate. While it provides good care for each learner there is insufficient rigour given to meeting individual educational needs. A culture of mutual respect and dignity for learners is well established. Links with parents/carers is good; many comment on the improvement made by learners in their development of maturity.
18. The provision for advice, guidance and support for learners is satisfactory. A high level of care is well established and includes comprehensive personal care plans and person-centred planning, which provide clear guidance on individual needs. Support staff have or are working towards NVQ level 3 or above in health and social care. The role of dedicated learning support staff has been recently established but indications for its success are encouraging. Support for the improvement of learners' behaviour is effective; behaviour plans are detailed. An external specialist organisation provides a highly structured advocacy service for learners to make choices and provide feedback on aspects of college life. Tutorial support is recently improved and now provides adequate personal guidance. The provision for speech and language specialist interventions is insufficient; although clearly identified, the outcomes of comprehensive initial communication assessments are not always used effectively to inform learner programmes. Weekly physiotherapy support provides valuable advice for staff and learners.

Leadership and management

Inadequate: Grade 4

*Contributory grade:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Inadequate: grade 4*

19. Leadership and management are inadequate. Strategic management is weak. Neither the board nor the senior management team employ sufficient rigour in the monitoring of the overall quality of the educational provision. The curriculum framework is underdeveloped and does not provide adequate opportunities for learners to progress. There is little systematic review of the impact of having LSC funded learners and individuals funded by social services in the same classes. The respective roles of the board and the senior management team lack clarity in relation to their responsibilities for monitoring the education provision.
20. The programme of teaching and learning observations does not adequately identify or help to improve weak performance. Inspectors judged a high proportion of the teaching to be unsatisfactory yet the college judged 43% of its lesson observations to be good. Observation protocols are cumbersome and do not support observers in making accurate judgements. The self-assessment process satisfactorily involves staff at all levels, but the report is not accurate and fails to identify some key areas for improvement in the organisation, particularly in leadership and management. Actions to promote improvements have not been timely or effective.

21. Communication amongst staff is satisfactory. Day-to-day operational arrangements are adequate. The daily education briefings are successful in promoting discussion and review of individual learner needs. The new accommodation provides an appropriate learning environment but a high proportion of staff do not have sufficient specialist teaching expertise. The college aspires to a total communication environment and a communication committee was recently established to support its development. However, there is an insufficient specialist speech and language therapy contribution to this group. While the area of learner communication is included in the education action plan, actions to bring about improvements lack detail and have not been effective.
22. Resources throughout college are satisfactory. However, some resources, such as books, are not always age appropriate. Community presence and participation are good; collaborative arrangements with the local FE college are well developed and are supported by a clear service level agreement. Management information systems are not sufficiently developed. Data are not used systematically to monitor and improve the quality of provision. The college actively seeks the views of its learners, parents, staff and other stakeholders. Effective use is made of the responses to bring about improvements, including better transport arrangements and the redecoration of residences.
23. Equal opportunities are inadequate. Equality and diversity are insufficiently promoted across the college and the curriculum. Not all education staff and Board members have received equality and diversity training; although plans are in place for the future. The monitoring of equality and diversity is not given sufficient priority by the Board or by senior managers. The achievement of different groups of learners are not monitored. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Comprehensive measures are in place to ensure the safeguarding of learners and health and safety issues are well addressed. The equal opportunities policy refers to the residential setting and does not adequately link to education. Policies relating to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) were only developed in December 2007; an adequate accessibility statement is in place. However, there is little evidence of the rigorous monitoring of the implementation of the action plans. The Board members maintain a strong oversight of the college's finances but their monitoring of the college's educational performance is weak. The college provides inadequate value for money.