

# 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. Conover College Limited (CCL) is registered as an industrial and provident society and has charitable status. It is a small independent specialist residential college in Shropshire providing for learners aged 18 and over with severe learning difficulties. Most have additional complex needs including visual impairment, profound physical disabilities, hearing loss, communication and challenging behaviour. There are currently 20 learners funded by the LSC.
2. Learners undertake a pre-entry programme of education for two or three years. Most learners are resident for 52 weeks a year, of which 14 weeks are funded by social services. The majority of learners remain within the organisation as permanent residents when they complete their programmes.

3. Education programmes are based at Grafton within a new purpose-adapted facility that opened in November 2007. Residential accommodation is provided a few miles away in small community-based homes at Condoover, Pontesbury and Bowmere Heath.
  
4. Learners' programmes are intended to develop their communication, independence, functional and personal skills. The college aims to provide 'a transition between school and adult life for young adults with a visual impairment and profound and multiple disabilities that is designed to maximise potential and independence'.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Satisfactory: contributory grade 3</i>

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The college has improved the effectiveness of its provision and is now satisfactory. Learners make good gains in the development of their personal and independence skills. They learn to effectively communicate their needs and preferences. Their confidence and self-esteem builds and behaviour improves. The recording of progress against short-term learning targets has improved since the last inspection. However, the college recognises that the capturing of long-term progress is underdeveloped.
6. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The quality of individual learners' targets has improved, based on a more thorough assessment of their needs. There is an increased emphasis on developing learners' communication skills. Planning is usually effective, although occasionally it concentrates too much on the completion of an activity rather than on individual learners' targets. Routine recording in sessions demonstrates the progress that is being made. Learners are enthusiastic and relationships are very good. Staff help learners to make choices and to be independent. Support assistants and staff from the learners' residencies assist learners effectively in making progress.
7. The college's approach to educational and social inclusion and to meeting the needs and interests of learners are satisfactory. The curriculum framework provides satisfactory progression for learners through the development of communication, numeracy, independence and personal skills, which are embedded across curriculum activities. Learners make a positive contribution to the community and participate in a wide range of enrichment and extended curriculum activities. Transition arrangements, including the creation of a more varied range of destination outcomes matched to individual needs, are underdeveloped. There is good promotion of health and safety.
8. Care, guidance and support for learners are good overall. Personal care and support are particularly good. A wide range of specialist support is available to learners to ensure their health and well-being. Support for learners to develop their communication skills has increased with the appointment of an experienced speech and language therapist. Care and behaviour planning to meet learners' needs are detailed and provide valuable guidance to staff on supporting learners.
9. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed director of education has very quickly established a shared culture of improvement and increased expectations; the pace of development has noticeably increased. Although not well expressed in the college's self-assessment report (SAR) and action plans, managers have a good understanding of the college's strengths and areas for further improvement and are successfully tackling the priority areas. Staff development opportunities are extensive but there is insufficient

professional development in relation to teaching and learning. Promotion of equality of opportunity and the approach to tackling discrimination are satisfactory. The college fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities in its recruitment of staff. The quality and range of college accommodation and learning resources are good and meet learners' needs well. The board of management satisfactorily fulfils its responsibilities and is effective in its support and challenge for managers. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

### Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. The college now demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. There is a good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. The SAR is broadly accurate. Quality improvement is effective and the college has successfully tackled the key areas for improvement since the last inspection. The pace applied to resolving previous weaknesses has increased substantially since the appointment of the director of education. The new quality framework is successfully informing improvement activity, especially through more rigorous observations of teaching and learning. Staff recruitment and continued professional development has broadened expertise to better meet learners' needs.

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

11. The college has taken satisfactory action to tackle the issues raised at the last inspection. There has been a significant increase in the number of qualified teachers and a wide-ranging programme of professional development; however, this has not focused enough on improving teaching and learning practice. A thorough review of planning and target setting has been carried out. These are based on a good understanding of learners' needs and their likely destinations. Individuals' targets are mostly used successfully to focus teaching and learning. The curriculum framework has been revised to provide greater opportunities for developing communication skills and making progress towards living more independently. Substantial progress has been made in establishing a total communication environment, especially through the work of the speech and language therapist. A new quality framework has been implemented and is providing valuable information which contributes to improvement; although specific targets have not yet been set against which progress can be more efficiently monitored. The board of management has increased its effectiveness in monitoring the college's provision.

### Key strengths

- good development of personal and independence skills
- wide range of enrichment and extended curriculum activities
- good personal care and specialist support
- good promotion of health and safety.

## Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- the recording and tracking of learners' long-term progress
- the planning of learning to better match individual needs
- curriculum opportunities and transition planning for progression to a wider range of destinations
- the need for professional development to be more focused on teaching and learning.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

12. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. This agrees with the college's own assessment. Learners make satisfactory progress in the development of communication skills, enabling them to make choices, express their needs and initiate conversations with their peers and members of staff. Their increased levels of independence help to build their confidence and self-esteem. Learners' behaviour becomes less challenging as their ability to communicate improves. They become more independent and where appropriate take responsibility for their own personal hygiene. They learn to cook, shop for personal items and handle money. Numeracy skills are less well developed in relation to concepts such as number, size and measurement. Learners improve their work-related skills but gains made in relation to these are insufficiently recorded. All learners achieve at least one national award that is appropriate to their needs. Learners participate well and enjoy their learning. They develop a good awareness of health and safety issues in relation to the activities they undertake. Attendance and retention are good.
13. The quality of learning targets has improved. Targets are more precise and based on rigorous baseline and ongoing assessment information. Most learners are making progress in relation to their short-term targets. However, capturing progress towards their long-term goals and destinations is underdeveloped. Destination outcomes for learners reflect their complex needs, with the majority remaining within the organisation for long-term care once their programme funded by the LSC has finished. The college recognises that, for a minority of learners, a wider range of destination outcomes, including continued further education and training, needs to be developed.

### Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. This is in line with the college's self-assessment and represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. Improvements made to learners' targets have ensured a greater focus on the most important aspects of their needs, especially in the development of communication skills.
15. An increased emphasis on developing learners' communication skills is evident in many aspects of teaching practice. Visual and tactile resources, including pictorial timetables and objects of reference, are used well to help learners understand. Signing has improved although it remains too inconsistent. Learners are enthusiastic and interested in what they are doing. Relationships between learners and staff are very good. Staff empower learners well to make choices and to be as independent as they can. Behaviour management is good. Support assistants and staff from the learners' residencies contribute effectively. They know the learners' targets well and work very conscientiously to help learners achieve them.

16. In some sessions, especially at the beginning and end, there is too much whole group teaching that fails to involve all of the learners. Similarly the planning for some sessions concentrates too much on the completion of an activity rather than on meeting individual learners' needs. Weak planning of the development of learners' numeracy skills results in too many missed opportunities to develop this aspect. Learners' needs relating, for example, to their visual impairment and physical disabilities, are understood well, although occasionally the choice of learning resources does not always take these sufficiently into account. Teachers and support staff routinely record the progress learners make towards their targets. However, learners are not always involved sufficiently in the assessment of their progress.
17. The college has accurately assessed its response to social and educational inclusion and the extent to which the curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners as satisfactory. It is inclusive and provides for the needs of very vulnerable learners with complex, physical and sensory impairments, learning difficulties and disabilities. There are increased opportunities for them to gain national awards in a range of subjects relevant to their individual learning plans.
18. The college now has a satisfactory 'Design for Living' curriculum framework which focuses on progression for learners through their development of communication, numeracy, independence and personal skills, which are embedded across curriculum activities. Greater links between residential and day provision help to provide a more coherent programme for learners; for example, individual targets devised to improve learners' communication skills are shared across residential and college provision. Opportunities for learners to take part in extended curriculum and enrichment activities are very good and increased use is made of community-based facilities to promote learning. Work experience and work-related activities have increased with the introduction of the 'Young Enterprise Scheme'. Work placements for individual learners are arranged appropriately. Links with schools and other providers are developing and six learners attend a local further education (FE) college.
19. Learners' views about their learning programmes are captured through questionnaires and tutorials. They are involved in staff recruitment. However, they are not able to influence whole college improvement, for example, through a learner council. Detailed risk assessments are in place for individual learners and good attention is paid to the promotion of health and safety.
20. Care, guidance and support are good. The college had judged this aspect to be satisfactory. The college provides a safe, secure and caring learning environment which encourages and motivates learners. A good range of specialist support is available, including counselling, physiotherapy, occupational, and speech and language therapy. Initial assessment to identify learners' communication, personal, and medical needs is comprehensive and provides useful information on which to base therapeutic programmes and the deployment of support staff. Care and behaviour plans are detailed and clearly focused on improving learners' personal, independence and social skills.

21. Tutorial arrangements are adequate and provide opportunities for learners to discuss their learning programmes with both college tutors and residential key workers, although tutorial documents do not yet contain sufficient information as to how well learners are progressing towards their learning targets. Guidance for learners moving to the next stage in their lives is arranged on an individual basis with good support provided by a local Connexions advisor. Transition planning is satisfactory, although the range of options open to learners when their programme ends is too narrow for a few of them.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

*Equality of opportunity*

*Satisfactory: grade 3*

22. Leadership and management are satisfactory, in line with the college's own self-assessment. The recently appointed director of education has very quickly established a culture of improvement and increased expectations. He is well supported by staff and there is a shared enthusiasm and ambition for all learners to achieve as much as they can. The pace of development has noticeably increased and quality improvement is effective. A new quality framework has been implemented and is beginning to provide systematic information about the quality of the college's provision; for example, the more rigorous procedures for observing teaching and learning now provide an accurate evaluation of the quality of lessons and demonstrate the improvements that have taken place. Procedures for assessing individual learners' needs and setting targets to meet these needs have also been substantially improved. However, the quality framework does not yet include performance criteria which would enable more efficient monitoring and measurement of improvements being made. All staff have been involved in the self-assessment process and have a good understanding of the college's strengths and areas for further improvement. Priority areas are successfully being tackled. Although broadly accurate, the SAR is not sufficiently analytical and action plans lack rigour. Effective management ensures the college runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.
23. The college has a satisfactory approach to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. It has responded adequately to equalities legislation. There has been a significant increase in the importance placed on monitoring and promoting equality and diversity throughout the college. The board of management has appointed a champion for this aspect of the college's work and discuss equality and diversity at each of their meetings. A whole college strategy has been established following a wide-ranging audit of equalities and diversity practice. A college-wide group, including learner representatives, is being set up to implement this strategy. The college monitors the ethnicity, disability and gender of learners and staff and has successfully increased the diversity of learner and staff groups. Staff routinely include the consideration of equality and diversity in their planning. Managers increasingly analyse the performance of different groups of learners but have yet to set targets for raising achievement.

24. The number of qualified teachers has been significantly increased since the last inspection. An extensive programme of continued professional development for both teachers and support staff covers a wide range of important areas; however, too little of it focuses directly on improving teaching and learning practice. The college fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities in the recruitment of staff. Training is undertaken by all staff on how to recognise and respond to any safeguarding concerns. The quality and range of college accommodation and learning resources are good and meet learners' needs well. Significant improvements have been made through the addition of a sensory room and a gardening poly-tunnel. More extensive use is made of facilities in the local community, especially for leisure activities and preparation for independent living. Links with other schools and colleges are developing well and leading to shared facilities, expertise and increased learner opportunities.
  
25. The board of management satisfactorily fulfils its responsibilities. Increased board membership has broadened its range of expertise and, together with the provision of improved information, enables more effective support and challenge for the college. Key appointments have been made to the roles of champions for quality assurance and equalities. The board continues to provide careful oversight of the college's finances. The college provides satisfactory value for money.