

RNIB College Loughborough

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates		19 – 21 November 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Students make good progress in the skills they need to become more independent and to achieve their long-term goals. These include developing confidence, independent living skills, managing their behaviour, gaining relevant qualifications and experience of work.
- Highly effective teamwork between tutors, support staff and therapists help students to develop their communication skills, their ability to make their own choices and engage fully in their learning.
- Teaching, learning and support are good in most lessons and particularly in the practical enterprise programmes. Most students develop good literacy and numeracy skills within the practical lessons.
- Good links with a wide range of local employers help students to develop their skills further and gain understanding of the world of work.
- Leaders and managers are very focused on providing a good range of opportunities for students to improve their personal, social and communication skills in realistic living, working and creative settings.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- In a few lessons, planned activities are not sufficiently focused on promoting individual learning and skills development.
- The systems for setting students' targets and recording their progress are too complex to be fully effective.
- The college's process for observing and improving the quality of lessons does not have sufficient focus on evaluating and improving the quality of students' individual learning and progress.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- A few tutors and support staff need further training in how to plan and manage effective learning activities appropriate to the individual needs of students. Also, managers should ensure that the focus is on promoting learning rather than on accreditation.
- Managers should rigorously review the system for setting targets to ensure that they are individual to students' needs. Simplify the assessment process to ensure improved consistency in recording and regularly review recording to ensure that it accurately captures students' skills and progress.
- Strengthen the lesson observation process to ensure a rigorous focus on evaluating and improving the quality of students' individual learning and progress. Evaluate the impact on improving staff performance of all actions and training arising from quality processes.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- The large majority of students successfully achieve their long-term goals and gain a wide range of appropriate foundation qualifications. Many students who attend the local further education college achieve higher level qualifications. Students make good progress relative to their starting points in developing the skills they need to become more independent and make life choices.
- Students develop good personal and social skills. They demonstrate improved social skills and the ability to make choices since attending college. Many are able to carry out living skills more independently, such as using a vacuum cleaner, sorting laundry and preparing drinks. The large majority of students learn to manage their own behaviour more effectively which impacts positively on their lives.
- Students benefit significantly from the very effective development of their communication skills. Students are more able to express their choices and communicate very effectively with others. Tutors enable this through good use of mobile technologies as speech generating communication aids. A student used a tablet computer very effectively in the café's food service area to greet customers and request their order. Many students make good use of sign language and symbols to initiate communication or respond to queries.
- Students that work towards externally accredited qualifications achieve very well. In 2011/12, the achievement rates across all courses were high including for those attending the local further education college. Students have access to a good range of qualifications that accredit both their personal and vocational skills development.
- Students develop literacy, numeracy and functional skills well. The large majority of students develop these skills very effectively within the practical enterprise lessons. However, where literacy and numeracy activities are based on paper resources, students' learning is less successful.
- Students develop their skills through a wide range of work placements. A high level of support helps students to adapt to new environments and learn to follow routines and instructions. Tutors set appropriate targets for work placements and students make good progress against them.
- Students' attendance and retention rates are high. A good proportion of students achieve their long term goals and progress to their chosen destinations. A high proportion of students progressed to further education or community activities in 2013. A few students progressed to higher education, supported employment or supported living arrangements. The college

recognises the need to increase the number of students progressing into supported living and is working more closely with students and families.

- Managers monitor data well to identify achievement gaps between different groups of students. While these were minimal in 2011/12, in previous years managers have taken good actions to close achievement gaps.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and contribute very effectively to the development of students' personal and social skills and to the high achievement of accredited qualifications. Tutors have high expectations of learners.
- Tutors plan most lessons in the enterprise programmes carefully to help students make good progress. In the majority of lessons students are enthusiastically engaged in a range of activities that motivate them, meet their individual needs and provide opportunities for structured learning to promote independence. Safe working is promoted very well.
- In successful lessons, tutors make good use of communication aids to support learning. Staff use signing and visual structure to enable students to work independently. Tutors use very effective questioning to engage students, check their understanding and monitor progress. Students are encouraged to self- and peer-assess their progress and develop independent learning skills. In the best lessons, students make clear choices and manage their planning and learning effectively.
- In the well-established residential programme, students develop appropriate life skills effectively in realistic settings. They gain life skills very well through the enterprise programme with well-planned opportunities for developing laundry, cooking, cleaning and food preparation skills. In a minority of lessons tutors and support assistants develop skills less effectively as plans are too focused on meeting the qualification evidence requirements rather than promoting individual learning.
- Support for learning is very effective in most lessons and promotes good development of students' independence and communication skills. Very effective behaviour management strategies enable students to participate fully in all activities and begin to better manage their own behaviour.
- Initial assessment is very thorough and identifies students' long-term targets very effectively. Medium- and short-term targets are clear but are not consistently individualised to students' needs. The assessment process is overly complex and the quality of recording students' skills and progress varies. However, students' annual summary reviews provide a very clear summary of their progress, skills development and next steps.
- The standard of students' work is good and tutors assess it thoroughly. Students receive clear feedback from tutors about their work that helps them to understand their skills development and how they can improve.
- Information, advice and guidance, and support are good. A wide range of activities, including home and school visits, help new learners make a smooth transition into the college. Transition planning is thorough and incorporates regular discussions to help students plan their progress towards their long-term goals. Communication with families is good.
- Speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, and support for students with visual impairment are very good. The speech and language therapist works very well with tutors to implement communication strategies. Students have very good access to specialised counselling. The broad scope and variety of local work-experience placements ensures that students have highly effective opportunities with appropriate support to develop their skills and awareness of the world of work.

- Tutors place good emphasis on developing students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills and these are successfully embedded across the enterprise curriculum. In the on-line selling enterprise, students have good opportunities to develop their information and communication technology skills (ICT), supported by a detailed handbook. However, literacy and numeracy activities based on paper resources are less effective in promoting learning.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college community is harmonious, tolerant of the diverse needs of students and promotes equality of opportunity through a culture of mutual respect. Activities throughout the year promote a range of events and celebrations, including effective engagement with the local community.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers provide clear aims and strategies for improvement based on a good understanding of the needs of students with increasingly complex learning difficulties and disabilities.
- The senior management team is very effective in ensuring students make good progress by providing a wide range of opportunities to improve their personal, social and communication skills in realistic living, working and creative settings. The standard of accommodation in the practical enterprise programmes is good.
- Increased involvement by governors and their improved participation in college activities has resulted in higher levels of critical support and challenge to senior managers. The governing body are kept well informed and contribute successfully to shaping the college's strategic direction. They are highly effective in monitoring the quality of provision and meet their statutory duties well.
- Increased quality assurance processes result in an overall improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Managers take appropriate actions to manage staff underperformance. Tutors and managers work together well to agree the actions needed to improve their performance. Action plans are used very well by managers in supervision sessions and annual appraisals to enable staff to reflect on and identify how to continuously improve their expertise and skills.
- Although improved, the judgements made about the quality of teaching and learning identified by college observers are too variable. Lesson observations have insufficient focus on evaluating students' learning and progress. Grades awarded do not always reflect the judgements they make about the quality of what they observe.
- Staff expertise and qualifications are appropriate and their skills are continually updated. They benefit from relevant staff development programmes that are supplemented by weekly meetings and training arising from evaluations of the lesson walk-throughs conducted by managers. Staff report that these are arranged promptly and are very useful. However, managers do not evaluate sufficiently the extent to which this additional training improves performance.
- Rigorous self-assessment processes provide detailed information to evaluate the college's strengths and areas for improvement. Actions to improve the quality of provision and the extent to which these impact on student outcomes are successfully monitored by senior managers and the governing body.
- Students' views are obtained through a wide variety of methods, including survey and representation on college committees and the governing board. Their views and complaints are successfully acted upon. Weekly planning meetings have been arranged in the residences in response to a request by a student to extend community based activities. Broadband access has improved as a result of a student wanting better ICT facilities within the halls of residence.

- Parents' views also contribute to the college's quality improvement. Their involvement helps to improve students' future independence and quality of experience. Managers work well with local employers who provide extensive opportunities for students to develop useful work related skills. They work effectively in partnership with local colleges, schools and other specialist colleges to improve transition arrangements and to share best practice.
- Leaders and managers promote a culture of mutual respect and promote equality and diversity that helps students to gain in independence and self-worth. The college effectively analyses achievement data in relation to their gender, ethnicity, and types of disability and learning difficulties. They take effective actions to address the gender imbalance and any low participation by student groups in enrichment activities.
- Safeguarding processes and procedures are rigorous and meet statutory requirements. Staff make students' health and safety a high priority. All staff receive regular training on safeguarding and new staff do not work unsupervised until they have had the appropriate checks. The college provides a welcoming and safe place for students to live and learn. Incidents of bullying and harassment are few and effectively dealt with.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

RNIB College Loughborough

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Independent living and leisure skills	2

Provider details



RNIB College Loughborough								
Type of provider	Independent specialist college							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 46							
	Part-time: 2							
Principal	Tony Warren							
Date of previous inspection	April 2008							
Website address	www.rnibcollege.ac.uk							
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	6	40	1	2	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	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								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	EFA							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Loughborough College 							

Contextual information

RNIB College Loughborough offers residential and day provision for students with complex learning needs. The majority of students have a visual impairment, although most students have multiple difficulties and/or disabilities. An increasing proportion of students enrolling to the college's day provision have complex communication needs. The college offers Residential Training for Disabled Adults (RTDA) provision funded through the Department for Work and Pensions. This was not within the scope of the inspection. The college is located in purpose-built accommodation on the campus of Loughborough College with the aim of enabling students to have access to the full range of provision of a mainstream general further education college. The college has a resource centre and staff based at Loughborough College.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Margaret Hobson HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Assistant Principal for Programmes as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider'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, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

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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