

Dilston College

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates		16–18 January 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 that helps them to communicate better and gain a wide range of skills to become more independent. They move-on successfully to local further education colleges or supported work schemes, and into supported living arrangements.
- Students learn well because staff have good expertise to meet their wide ranging needs. Staff have a very good understanding of what students can do and have high expectations for how much they can learn.
- The increased emphasis on planning for when students leave the college has resulted in a very good curriculum that includes valuable community and work related learning opportunities.
- The principal and senior managers have a very good understanding of how to improve students' outcomes still further and use performance management successfully to improve the quality of teaching. The parent charity and a local advisory group provide effective support.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Targets to improve students' personal and social skills are not used consistently across all of their time at college.
- Weaknesses in planning in a few sessions means that tutors do not always provide enough work to challenge the more-able learners or allow the less-able learners to be as independent as possible because they give them too much support.
- Information from teaching observations and the success of staff professional development is not used as effectively as possible to ensure all learning sessions are of at least good quality.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Systematically evaluate the effectiveness of action plans following observations of teaching, learning and assessment to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that all learning sessions are of at least good quality.
- Rigorously implement students' cross-college targets, together with improving the tracking, recording and evaluation of their progress towards these targets, in order to increase their personal and social development.
- Plan thoroughly for the wide range of abilities in every learning session so that all students' needs are met equally well.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes for students are good. Students successfully achieve their learning targets in all subject areas and gain a wide range of appropriate and meaningful foundation qualifications. They make good progress relative to their starting points in developing the skills they need to increase their independence in their future lives. ▪ Students make significant improvements in their communication, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. They become more adept at using e-mail, tablet computers and mobile phones as communication aids. They are more able to express their choices and communicate more effectively with others, for example, tablet computers are used by students in local cafes and shops to help them to communicate what they would like to buy. Students learn to handle money effectively, and, if capable, become competent at writing lists and shop for food and for their own personal requirements. ▪ Students become more independent and integrate successfully into the wider community through their regular trips to the local shops and use of leisure facilities. They gain in confidence and their behaviour improves significantly as they learn through experience what is expected of them in social situations. Some are able for the first time to travel independently on public transport. Parents of one student were particularly pleased that their son's behaviour had greatly improved and that they could now sit down for a family meal together. ▪ Students make significant advances in developing their readiness for the next step in their lives after leaving college. They make very good progress in developing work-related skills by learning to be punctual, to follow routines and instructions, to dress appropriately and to interact appropriately with fellow workers and customers. Students familiarise themselves with and learn to cope in a different learning environment, and many are successful at sustaining their place on courses at local general further education colleges. ▪ Achievement gaps between different groups of students are minimal. College data shows little variation between different ability groups. However, this is based largely on students' attainment of learning targets set in subject areas. Students' achievements in personal and social skills development are not sufficiently recorded. Learning targets in these areas are not adequately identified, tracked or monitored to ensure that all students achieve according to their potential. ▪ Students' attendance and retention rates are high. They enjoy and are fully engaged in their learning. Many students achieve their long-term goals and progress to their chosen destinations. A high proportion is successful at gaining places on courses at local further education colleges. A small number gain some form of work through supported work schemes and voluntary organisations. The majority of students who leave the college achieve a higher level of independence. Many succeed in moving onto independent or supported living arrangements. 	

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment**Good**

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and contribute well to the substantial progress made by students. All staff have high expectations of what students can achieve and provide strong individualised support to enable them to succeed.
- Tutors use their skills and experience very effectively through well planned lessons with good resources and a wide range of activities in classrooms, workshops and in the workplace to fully engage, challenge and motivate students. Initial assessment information is comprehensive and is used very effectively to identify long-term goals for students to work towards. However, planning to meet students' social and personal development is inconsistent and staff are not yet fully successful in implementing cross-college targets for these important aspects of learning.
- Where required, very effective behaviour management strategies by all staff enable students to participate in an increasingly wide range of activities and begin to develop the skills to manage their own behaviour. Development of a sensory and communication programme, led by the therapists, provides further support. Staff effectively promote students' awareness of health and safety in the work environment. Guidance from risk assessments is implemented consistently.
- Tutors use very effective questioning to check students' understanding, monitor progress and ensure that all students contribute fully through verbal or signing responses. Occasionally tutors miss opportunities to set students tasks that would explore the full extent of their understanding. Students are encouraged to assess their own skills and those of their peers.
- Staff focus well on improving students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills in many practical skills workshops and skills for daily life sessions. A good range of ICT resources is used successfully to develop students' communication skills and increase their ability to be independent. Students' communication passports explain how they communicate most effectively and help develop their independence when working in new settings. However, opportunities are missed for developing literacy and mathematics in a small number of sessions. Similarly signing is not used consistently with all students who use it as an important means of their communication.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Staff provide detailed and immediate feedback that helps students to improve and build on skills they have gained. They help them progress towards their longer-term goals, especially through work-experience placements and practical workshops that help students develop skills for employment and adult life.
- The promotion of equality and diversity through teaching and learning is satisfactory. Relationships are excellent and staff provide very good support if students have any concerns. However, occasionally weaknesses in session planning can lead to the more-able learners not being challenged sufficiently and the less-able students being given too much support.

The effectiveness of leadership and management**Good**

- The principal and senior leaders have a very clear vision for the future of the college. This is based on a detailed understanding of regional and national policy, including the use of more localised provision for students who might previously have attended the college, and the increase in the number of students who have severe and complex learning disabilities. These developments place the college in a very good position to fulfil a broader role in improving the lives of young adults who have significant learning disabilities who attend the college or who live in the locality.
- The focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been effective and has consequently improved students' outcomes. Staff-performance management is used well. College managers routinely monitor the quality of learning sessions and key aspects of tutors' planning. Managers' evaluations undertaken as joint observations during the inspection were in line with those of inspectors. Continued professional development has been successful in

improving staff skills, for example, in the use of ICT to support learning, such as with interactive white boards and tablet computers.

- Self-assessment is accurate and enables key areas for improvement to be identified. A key strength of this activity is that it is on-going and has supported continuous quality improvement. Information is regularly collected to monitor the quality of provision and demonstrate that improvements have been largely effective. Further development through the use of enhanced management-information systems is tackling remaining inconsistencies, for example, in improving further the quality of students' targets, and the evaluation of the impact of improvement in teaching, learning and assessment.
- The college's surveys of students and parents provide very positive feedback. These views were consistent with those obtained by inspectors. Parents commented on how pleased they are with the progress their sons and daughters were making, especially in their communication, personal and social skills. The college is keen to increase their survey response rate from parents and is trialling additional methods of increasing their involvement, for example, through regular newsletters.
- Mencap, as the college's parent charity, provides effective support and challenge through a broad range of quality assurance reports and reviews. This work is supported locally by a cross-college advisory group which contributes important comment on the college's work and developments.
- The curriculum is very good and meets the wide range of students' needs very well. A review of the curriculum has resulted in more individualised programmes based on students' aspirations and likely destinations after leaving college, as far as these can be determined. The emphasis on planning for this transition has led to an increase in the use of community-based learning opportunities and partnerships with other providers to extend students' learning opportunities. There has also been an increased recognition of the importance of learning targets that are used across all aspects of students' programmes.
- The college is successful in ensuring all students are treated equally; high regard is placed on meeting their individual needs. Students say that they feel safe and know who to speak with if they have concerns or are unhappy. No worries were expressed by the students or by their parents about bullying. E-safety is tackled through the use of an information leaflet that is prepared using easy to read text and symbols. A member of staff goes through this leaflet with each student to try to ensure they understand how to keep safe. This policy is supported by direct teaching of how to use the internet and social networking safely.
- Statutory requirements for the safeguarding of learners are met. Required recruitment checks are carried out on new staff. All staff receive regular training on safeguarding and new staff do not work unsupervised until they have completed their training. More advanced training is undertaken by the designated senior manager. There are clear procedures for reporting concerns to local safeguarding agencies and to Mencap's senior managers. Work experience placements are appropriately checked for students' health and safety and suitable risk assessments are carried out on all college-based activities.

▪ Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Dilston College		
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Foundation Learning
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Outcomes for students	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

Provider details

Dilston College	
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of students	16+
Approximate number of all students over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 57
	Part-time: N/A
Principal	Nick Kozlowski
Date of previous inspection	30 January - 2 February 2007
Website address	www.mencap.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/education-and-learning/dilston-college

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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of students (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	11	36	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Part-time	2	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Number of students aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community students	N/A							
Number of employability students	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Charlie Henry HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the vice principal 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 students' 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 students, parents and, and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. 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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