

St Elizabeth's College (The Congregation of the Daughters of the Cross of the Liege)

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates

21–23 November 2017

Overall effectiveness		Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Provision for learners with high needs Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding	
Outcomes for learners	Good	
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Learners make excellent progress in developing their personal, social and independence skills. Their communication improves considerably during their time at college, and learners are able to communicate their choices well.
- High-quality information, advice and guidance ensure that learners have ambitious and realistic plans for their next steps after their courses.
- All staff put learners' safety and welfare at the centre of all provision. Good care is taken to safeguard learners so that their well-being improves.
- Learners' outcomes are now good and improving.
- Leaders and managers hold high aspirations for learners and set high standards. They are constantly seeking ways to help learners achieve their potential.
- Managers manage the college well and have created a stable and enthusiastic staff team.
- Managers have successfully developed a strong culture of continuous improvement among all staff.
- Learners with the most complex needs have a high-quality educational experience. They are well supported by a wide range of appropriate therapies that help them engage with learning.
- In a small minority of cases, staff have not set learning tasks at the right level; as a result, learners are reluctant to participate and a few quickly lose interest.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not plan activities that enable learners to progress as well as they are able with their reading and writing skills.
- After observations of teaching and learning practice, managers do not record areas for improvement in sufficient detail to ensure that teachers know what to do to improve.

Full report

Information about the provider

- St Elizabeth's College is part of St Elizabeth's Centre, founded by the Daughters of the Cross of the Liege. The centre is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee which was established as a national centre for people with disabling epilepsy. The governors of the college report to the centre's trustees. The college is located on a rural site near Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire, and provides education programmes for young adults with a range of medical and complex learning needs. Many learners have additional needs, requiring physical and medical support. A multi-disciplinary team, including specialist nurses, occupational, speech and language therapists and physiotherapists, provide this.
- Learners are working at or below level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework. The majority of the 18 enrolled learners are in residence at the college and have tenancies with a housing association, while three learners attend as day placement learners. Learners are recruited predominantly from the south and east of England.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan and pace activities that enable learners to progress with their reading and writing skills, as well as they are able, in all activities
 - teachers set learning tasks at an appropriate level so that learners are keen to take part and maintain their interest throughout the learning activities.
- Improve the effectiveness of observations of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that observers' written records have sufficient detail to show teachers and learning support assistants how to improve further.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, managers and leaders have succeeded in improving the quality of the provision. The college is now fully staffed with well-qualified staff members who are highly committed to improving learners' outcomes.
- Leaders and managers hold high aspirations both for learners and for the college. They communicate their vision well so that staff are clear about the high standards expected.
- Managers have successfully developed a strong ethos of continuous improvement with all staff in the college. They have put in place a comprehensive system to check on the quality of the provision throughout the year, and make improvements. Leaders have confidence in the managers' ability to sustain standards over time.
- Leaders and managers know the college and the learners well. They use a rigorous system to evaluate their provision, making clear and accurate judgements based on how the provision improves outcomes for learners. They use this information very effectively to identify priorities, check on outcomes and set future improvement plans.
- Managers ensure that strong transition arrangements are in place so that learners are well prepared for joining and leaving the college. They make good use of transition meetings and reviews of education, health and care plans (EHCPs), carried out by a multi-disciplinary team, to capture learners' views and make future plans.
- Through Connexions, managers provide learners with good impartial and specialist information, advice and guidance that help them make decisions about their next steps. Learners, parents and carers are clear about what options and support are available and staff ensure that realistic plans for the future are acted upon in good time.
- Managers use regular supervision and appraisals well to support staff and check on their progress in making improvements. They provide good-quality training, on topics such as sign language and autism, to develop staff in line with college priorities and enable them to reflect on best practice. Teaching and support staff feel valued and are enthusiastic about how they can bring creativity and innovation to their practice.
- Leaders and managers make good use of the funding for learners with high needs. Programmes are well designed to help learners improve their English, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, as well as broaden their horizons. Learners' interest in the wider world is stimulated and they develop an appreciation of their rural surroundings and the natural environment.
- Managers carefully develop partnerships with Connexions, local charities, specialist support providers and farm venues so that learners enjoy enhanced learning experiences which support them effectively in their journey towards independence and adulthood.
- Managers regularly carry out observations of teaching and learning that result in stronger professional practice. They observe the professional practice of learning support assistants as well as teachers, and the quality of learning support is now good.
- In a few instances, managers do not record feedback following observations of teaching and learning in enough detail for teachers to see easily what they need to improve.

Managers have recognised this and have designed a new system of professional development that includes a more comprehensive observation and recording system that is soon to be implemented.

The governance of the provider

- Governance has improved since the previous inspection. Governors play a central role in setting a clear strategic direction, and in checking that the provision continues to improve. They are experienced, carry out regular observations of teaching and learning and understand accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They provide the director of education with support and challenge, which helps to improve the provision.
- Governors use their expertise well to interrogate comprehensive reports; they hold managers to account for assuring the quality of the provision, and check that outcomes for learners are improving. Meetings are well managed; governors take an active role in evaluating the provision and oversee improvement planning.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding is given an extremely high priority. All staff are well trained and aware of their responsibilities. The deputy headteacher is the lead member of staff for safeguarding and responds to incidents swiftly, working closely with the local authority safeguarding team when a safeguarding concern is identified.
- Managers set clear safeguarding standards. Policies are regularly updated and include clear guidance for staff on 'whistle blowing', inappropriate use of ICT equipment, racism, the 'Prevent' duty and the dangers of radicalisation and terrorism. Staff effectively use the policies in their work with learners about keeping themselves and others safe.
- Managers follow safe recruitment procedures to check the suitability of staff working with learners. Staff are required to have satisfactory safeguarding checks before starting work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of learners and plan challenging tasks to prepare them for independent living and adult life. Learners benefit from effective support from specialist staff, such as speech and language therapists, which helps them progress well.
- Teachers use assessments well to establish learners' starting points. Assessment is on-going; learners and staff contribute well so that plans are frequently reviewed and updated. Staff listen carefully to learners' views and enable them to make informed choices about their learning in close collaboration with parents, carers and professional agencies.
- Teachers negotiate, set and prioritise relevant, realistic and measurable learning targets, so that learners recognise their own progress and know what they need to do to improve. Learners participate in setting new challenges for themselves.
- Most teachers use their knowledge about learners very effectively to plan interesting and relevant lessons that motivate the vast majority. Learners improve their concentration and develop good teamworking, as well as practical and creative abilities. In one session,

learners worked well together, sharing ideas about what shapes and colours they would use in creating decorations.

- Most staff are well qualified and use their expertise well to support learners with complex needs. They use skilful questioning and signing to help learners participate and improve their communication skills, deploying appropriate aids where necessary.
- Managers use the EHCPs and other assessment information very well to coordinate specialist support that helps learners overcome or reduce their barriers to learning. The work of therapists is good. Staff coordinate this work effectively so that all learners who need it receive it, enabling them to improve their communication skills and settle well into college life. Aqua therapy improves learners' fitness, and music therapy helps learners reduce their anxiety.
- Teachers make good use of high-quality resources to engage learners. Learners use information learning technologies (ILT) confidently and enjoy games and quizzes on interactive boards that develop their thinking skills. Learners benefit from colourful and well-presented worksheets with signs, symbols and pictures so they can readily understand what they are learning and the tasks they need to complete.
- Teaching staff carefully record and measure learners' progress so that learning programmes can be effectively tailored to support learners. Teachers and support assistants make good use of photographic evidence to help learners build diaries of their activities and recognise their skill development. For example, learners had annotated photographs of their work on a farm helping with the farm animals and horses.
- Teaching staff develop learners' English, mathematical and ICT skills well throughout lessons and activities. Teachers routinely plan activities that include practise of these skills within their learning and enrichment programmes. Learners use simple measurements in food preparation and learn to recognise, count and understand the value of money when working at the on-site shop or paying for their own meal when dining out.
- Teachers include a wide range of topics that celebrate diversity and give learners understanding of life in modern Britain. In art lessons, learners explore the work of different artists and how they influence society. Learners have good opportunities to understand the value of democracy through voting on activities and they are encouraged to respect and value differences in others.
- In a minority of cases, teachers do not focus well enough on developing learners' specific reading and writing skills, such as extracting the main idea from the text, scanning for information or planning for writing. As a result, too many learners do not progress as well as they might with their literacy skills.
- In a small minority of cases, teachers do not set tasks at the appropriate level and a few learners quickly lose interest. At times, support assistants help too much and learners make little progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

- All learners make excellent progress in developing their personal, social, independence and employability skills. Their standards of practical work are particularly good in relation to their previous achievements. Most learners make big strides in their personal

development while others make small, but very significant steps towards independent living.

- Learners make significant progress in improving their communication skills, particularly those with complex needs. Sensitive teaching staff and therapists provide good specialist support; within the college's calm atmosphere, this results in excellent improvements in behaviour. Learners reduce disruptive behaviour, increase their feelings of self-worth and make friends at the college.
- Learners demonstrate very good attitudes to learning. Managers and staff use good strategies, both in and outside of teaching sessions, which ensure that learners' concentration improves. Managers, therapists and teaching staff work very closely together, across the residential and college provision, to share information that improves learners' health and welfare.
- Learners improve their well-being considerably in the supportive and positive environment. All staff are very skilled at helping learners with their medical needs and work closely together to improve behaviour and seizure management. In many instances, the number of seizures learners experience reduces and they become better able to concentrate on learning.
- Learners gain good understanding about how to keep healthy. Teachers reinforce healthy lifestyle messages well and learners particularly enjoy taking part in physical activities such as swimming and bowling.
- Learners quickly grow in confidence and become more self-assured as they increasingly take part in lessons and make positive contributions to discussions. Learners gain confidence through participation in the learners' council and in transition planning reviews, where staff place great emphasis on learners making choices and decisions themselves about their learning and their future.
- Learners know how to keep themselves safe and staff reinforce this understanding throughout their learning programmes. Learners gain a greater sense of self and take more responsibility for themselves. They gain a simple awareness of internet safety at a suitable level for their needs.
- Learners benefit from very good opportunities for work-related activity and work placements. Placements are chosen to match their interests and to develop their personal and work-related skills. Learners value and enjoy work placements in different settings, such as Churchfarm and Rural Rainbow, where they learn about caring for animals, crop gathering and basic farm maintenance. They often try different placements in settings such as a library, a café, the college shop or a supermarket.
- Learners improve their social skills extremely well, and are polite and respectful. Most develop their mathematical, English and ICT skills. Learners make good use of computers in class to improve their ICT skills. Learners take pride in their work; they understand the importance of their education and how it prepares them for further education and employment.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Learners make good progress during their programme compared with their starting points. Progress is often better than expected and most make the progress that they are capable of. The large majority make good progress in their skills in English, mathematics and ICT. For a few learners, progress is not always steady due to ill health; in these cases, nurses, therapists and the whole staff team work hard to help the learner remain in learning.
- The achievement of learning goals is very good; the large majority of learners achieve their qualifications. Teachers carefully plan appropriate learning at the start of a learner's programme. Learning plans are reviewed and revised throughout the year so that learners take vital small steps towards challenging learning goals. As a result, they achieve qualifications, such as Skills for Working Life and Personal Progress.
- Learners, for whom it is appropriate, achieve vocational qualifications that increase their ability to gain employment. They learn to follow instructions, and know how to work safely and manage stock control. They are very proud of their work achievements.
- Learners enjoy their learning and are proud of the college. They take an active role in open days, providing a good welcome for visitors, displaying their work, and showing prospective learners and parents around. Learners with little communication are helped to express themselves and more able learners develop skills of advocacy that they use in college.
- Most learners make above expected progress towards independence and achieve good employment-related skills. Many learners progress to further learning and supported living, and a few take up paid or voluntary employment. Learners' improved communication skills help them to become more independent in everyday life.
- Managers collect a good range of information to check on the outcomes for learners when they leave the college. They find that learners are often well settled in their communities, continuing to develop as independent or supported adults, enjoying work, meeting friends for a drink or going away for short breaks.
- The highly personalised approach to teaching and learning ensures that the rates at which learners make progress are not different between varying groups of learners.

Provider details

Unique reference number	132015
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	25
Principal/CEO	Sharon Wallin
Telephone number	01279 844419
Website	www.stelizabeths.org.uk/collegedefaulthome

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	-	18	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	18							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy headteacher, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Penny Mathers, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Margaret Garai	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Gunn	Ofsted Inspector

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