

WESC Foundation

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates		20–22 May 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Not enough teaching, learning and assessment are good or better.
- The baseline from which staff measure students' progress is not sufficiently detailed or accurate.
- The study programme for students with complex needs is too narrow and does not meet the needs, interests and aspirations of each student.
- Targets set for students are not always sufficiently precise to enable them to develop the skills they need to allow them to live as independently as possible.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Success rates for learners taking externally assessed vocational qualifications are high.
- Highly effective mobility training enables many students to get to local shops, work placements and leisure facilities along agreed routes and using public transport where required.
- The college provides a particularly good range of work experience for the vocational students that successfully develops the skills they need to fulfil their employment aspirations.
- The teachers' forum and senior practitioners are effective in improving teaching and learning and in developing the curriculum.
- Senior managers have developed particularly effective partnerships with employers, parents and other groups. They enable vocational students to develop the skills they require for their lives after college and parents to learn about different aspects of the training programmes.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure staff set an accurate and detailed baseline for each student so they can effectively monitor students' progress from their starting points across a wide range of indicators.
- Managers need to develop further the programme of study for the students with the most complex needs so their interests, needs and aspirations are the starting point for building an individual curriculum.
- Make sure staff develop and set precise and meaningful targets for students to achieve, including targets for personal and social development and employability skills, which will enable students to live as independently as possible.
- Equip staff to work effectively with students with complex needs by providing appropriate training and resources.
- Ensure all teachers implement actions following an observation of teaching and learning so they are better placed to improve their practice.
- Analyse and use the wide range of data available to further develop and improve provision. Analyse data across a wider range of groups and disabilities to ensure there are no achievement gaps.
- Produce a more sharply focused self-assessment report so it is less descriptive and more realistic in its judgements.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Students who take externally assessed qualifications in both vocational skills and life and living skills achieve very well. However, students' achievement of individual learning goals and personal and social development targets has declined. Assessments completed at the start of the programme of learning are not sufficiently detailed. They do not effectively measure the relevance of transition goals and students' progress against them.
- Progress towards achieving functional skills targets is very good in English where standards have improved for each of the last three years, but in functional skills mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) achievement levels have fallen and now require improvement.
- The achievement of externally accredited qualifications in vocational and academic subjects is good for the small number of students on these courses. Success rates are high for students who undertake vocational courses, for example in business administration, public services, radio production, health and social care and land-based industries. The few students who entered for GCSEs in science, English and mathematics in the last two years all achieved.
- Students' progression into further or higher education, training or into employment is satisfactory. Students now studying at the college have more complex needs than in previous years, resulting in fewer students having the capacity to progress into education, training or unsupported employment. However, the very great majority of vocational learners with the ability to progress do so. The college has been particularly successful in employing former students, five of whom hold positions in the college in social enterprise, ICT and residential care support.
- Students develop their employability skills well through a wide range of work placements. They improve their time keeping and grow in confidence, which enables them to speak well to different people. Students report that they really enjoy their work experience; they like trying different jobs and enjoy meeting new people. However, although placement providers report

that students develop a good range of both work-related skills and personal and social skills, staff are not capturing this information in sufficient detail to record students' progress accurately.

- Students develop mobility skills very well. Following detailed risk assessments, many students learn to get to local shops, work placements and leisure facilities along agreed routes and using public transport where required. One student, who had previously been dependent upon taxi transport to travel to the college, now routinely uses public transport for her weekend journeys home.
- Managers have not been sufficiently quick to address the identified gap in achievement of individual targets between male and female students. Females have underperformed significantly over the least three years, but no detailed analysis of the causes has been undertaken nor measures implemented to close the achievement gap. Analysis of performance in functional skills indicates no significant differences in performance between different groups of students. However, there is insufficient analysis of data to determine differences in achievements in other subject areas.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers have high expectations for the vast majority of students, but for a small and growing number of students with more complex needs teachers' expectations are too low. The declining achievement of learning and personal goals reflects the low expectations.
- In too many lessons for students with complex needs, the activities provided by teachers do not always meet individual needs and students become disengaged. In the best lessons, teachers construct tasks carefully and provide opportunities for students to reach their learning goals. Students are motivated, stay on task and ask for more stretching work. In a small number of lessons for students with complex needs, the lack of individualised programmes limits the opportunity for teachers to motivate and challenge them sufficiently.
- Teachers provide appropriate challenge and stimulating work to develop learning, knowledge and the practical skills required to achieve formal qualifications and independence skills in most vocational lessons. In a radio production unit, students were fully absorbed in producing a breaking news bulletin under pressure to simulate real work.
- Enablers provide good support for the majority of students on vocational programmes. They know their students well and use effective strategies to help them learn. However, too many enablers working with students with complex needs do not work effectively to support learning. Too many enablers failed to understand the needs of complex students and therefore the challenge for those students was lost and they stopped taking an active part in the lesson.
- Skilled staff train students well to use access technology appropriately; for example, in one lesson all the students were using different equipment to write calendar invitations on the computer. However, for students with complex needs, resources are inadequate and staff make too little use of assistive technology to support students with their learning.
- Care and therapeutic support are good. Therapists work with teaching staff and enablers to model effective therapeutic work and provide guidance. For example, during a recent healthy eating week a multidisciplinary approach led to the setting up of a walking club, which increased students' physical activity and improved their fitness and posture. The college's development of behavioural support strategies for students with complex needs to ensure satisfactory management of self-harming behaviour requires improvement.
- The monitoring and recording of students' progress requires improvement. Staff are not able to accurately measure the progress and distance travelled for each student because the assessments of students' abilities and skills at the start of their programmes are not sufficiently detailed. Targets recorded on individual education plans (IEPs) are too broad and taken directly from the review documentation. Teachers rarely break these down into manageable, focused

targets, thus restricting the ability of students to achieve their overall aims through incremental steps of development.

- The visual impairment assessments carried out at the start of students' programmes are good and provide specific and relevant information to enable teachers to plan effectively to meet individual needs.
- Teachers' checking of students' progress in lessons is adequate. Teachers and students jointly evaluate the work at the end of lessons. This immediate verbal feedback from peers and staff enables students to understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve further. However, on occasions it is difficult to see how the students have arrived at the final piece of work, as there is little evidence of any other form of assessment.
- Teachers skilfully integrate English, mathematics and ICT well in most lessons. Students are able to practise and extend their skills within functional skills lessons and use access technology well to support their learning.
- Pre-entry advice and guidance are excellent. A well-structured programme of visits and assessments provides good opportunities for potential students and their parents/carers to make informed decisions about the suitability of the college. Transition planning for when students leave college is thorough and effective. An annual transition day involves support agencies and a wide range of other providers who run workshops and advice sessions for students and their parents/carers.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well in lessons. The personal, social, health and education (PHSE) curriculum effectively covers sexuality and relationships, transgender and same sex relationships. Students regularly explore other cultures and religions through curriculum subjects. The college recently held a whole college event exploring the Commonwealth Games, where each student researched a country of their choice and cooked a meal linked to that culture. Staff and students demonstrate a mutual respect for each other, both in lessons and across the college.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The Principal and senior managers set a clear vision for the continuing development of the college in their new strategic plan. The plan identifies how the college will develop over the next three years while maintaining its core provision. The Principal and senior managers have high expectations for all students, but not all staff have the same high expectations for students with complex needs.
- The Board of Trustees provides appropriate challenge to senior managers. The college recognised the need to strengthen the board and recently appointed a new Chair of the Board of Trustees with a background in business management and employment law. The trustees receive a wide range of reports covering most aspects of provision and strongly focus on the business needs of the college. However, they receive insufficient information on the achievements of students.
- The college has developed a wide range of effective partnerships with employers and other groups that provide students with a good range of opportunities to gain real work-related experience. The Parents as Partners group is an effective forum, which enables parents to learn about, and understand, different aspects of the curriculum. Since the last inspection, the Principal has been involved in research into the uses of neuroscience. She has led several training sessions for staff to help them improve how they work with visually impaired students. This work is beginning to have a positive impact on the learning experiences of some students.
- Leaders and managers give a high priority to improving teaching and learning. The teachers' forum is used effectively to share good practice in teaching and learning. Senior practitioners are effective in mentoring and supporting teachers who need to improve. The links between performance management and teaching and learning are strong and senior managers use the processes well to raise the standard of teaching. However, further refinement of the processes

is required, as inspectors did not grade the quality of teaching and learning as high as the college observers' grades. Senior managers acknowledge they need to tighten up processes and ensure teachers complete actions following observations of their teaching.

- All staff have particularly good access to training and development. Staff speak highly of the opportunities they have to improve their professional knowledge and qualifications. However, more focused training is required to enable staff to work effectively with students with the most complex needs. Staff need more training to help them consistently set clear, precise targets for all students.
- Quality improvement processes concentrate appropriately on the evaluation and effectiveness of programmes. Thorough monitoring by managers leads to improvements in the curriculum offer. The college's self-assessment processes are comprehensive, but the report is overly long, too descriptive and over optimistic in its judgements. Managers do not use data well enough to review trends, inform self-assessment and drive improvements.
- The students have a strong voice in the college. Student representatives sit on a wide range of committees and positively contribute to developments in the college. The student council is active and identifies areas for improvement, which managers are quick to implement.
- Study programmes meet the needs of students on vocational programmes well. These students have access to a wide range of vocational qualifications, which enable them to follow programmes that match their long-term work-related aims. The development of the curriculum for students with the most complex needs is not as well established. The programme options for students with complex needs do not always match their needs and interests.
- Managers and staff promote all aspects of equality and diversity well. The college provides a caring and inclusive community, with very clear expectations of behaviour. Staff tackle bullying well and there are few instances of such behaviour. Staff analysis of data identified a gap in the achievements of male and female students, but the analysis requires improvement to cover a wider range of groups and disabilities.
- The college meets its statutory requirement for safeguarding students. Detailed policies and procedures are in place to safeguard students with appropriate health and safety arrangements. Procedures for checking the suitability of staff, volunteers, contractors and trustees are particularly rigorous. Training for staff and trustees is regular and up to date. Staff investigate safeguarding incidents effectively, but records of actions taken to resolve concerns are not always complete.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

WESC Foundation College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	3	-	-	3	-	3	-	-	-
Outcomes for learners	3	-	-	3	-	3	-	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	-	-	3	-	3	-	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	-	-	3	-	3	-	-	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Independent living and leisure skills	3

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent specialist college							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	82							
Principal/CEO	Tracy De Bernhardt Dunkin							
Date of previous inspection	April 2008							
Website address	www.wescfoundation.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+
	6	30	-	10	-	2	-	-
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 14-16								
Full-time	13							
Part-time	-							
Number of community learners	-							
Number of employability learners	-							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Exeter College Bicton College Dawlish Garden Trust							

Contextual information

WESC Foundation is an independent specialist college located in Exeter, Devon. All students have a visual impairment. The college caters for students from the cognitively able to those with profound multiple learning difficulties and disabilities. In recent years the number of students with varied and complex needs has increased. Most of the 48 students are residential and around 90% of the students are White British. Most students follow the vocational curriculum pathway, which enables them to study in the area of their choice either at WESC or in a partner college. Students with complex needs follow the Momentum programme and all students take part in the Skills and Knowledge for Independent People (SKIP) programme. This programme supports the transition process and prepares students for living as independently as possible.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Margaret Swift HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the deputy 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 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 relevant provision at the provider. 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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