

Royal College Manchester (Seashell Trust)

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates

18–20 October 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 | | Outstanding | |

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders, managers and staff have maintained a culture of high expectations of what students can achieve, which they promote successfully among parents, carers, employers and other stakeholders.
- Staff manage students' transition into and out of the college extremely effectively through careful and supportive interaction with them and their parents and carers.
- Staff apply an excellent range of strategies that ensure that students learn how to develop positive behaviours, and control and improve their conduct and actions.
- Students develop highly effective communication skills that allow them to participate fully in learning activities and to make choices appropriate to their needs and interests.
- The multidisciplinary team approach supports students seamlessly across their various activities, helping them to improve their participation, progress and confidence.
- Students demonstrate very high levels of self-confidence and take great pride in their work.
- Accurate assessments to establish students' starting points are effective in developing personalised programmes that help them to achieve their aspirations.
- Students integrate successfully into the local and wider communities through purposeful work experience and additional opportunities.
- Leaders, managers and governors do not give enough attention to the actions required to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of a minority of teachers.
- While teaching and learning are good, a minority of teachers and support staff do not take sufficient account of students' individual needs and starting points when planning lessons.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Royal College Manchester is an independent specialist residential and day college catering for students aged 19 to 25 who have severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Royal College Manchester is part of the Seashell Trust and is located on a large site in Cheadle, Greater Manchester, which it shares with Royal School Manchester.
- Royal College Manchester takes students from all parts of the United Kingdom and works currently with 28 local authorities. A high proportion of students have very complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities that affect their communication and their emotional and behavioural development. The vast majority of students follow pre-entry study programmes that are personalised to individual needs and abilities. The majority of students are male. Approximately 20% of students are of minority-ethnic heritage.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - leaders' and managers' actions to improve the performance of a minority of teaching and support staff result in a consistent and sustained improvement in the quality of their teaching
 - teachers plan learning that takes into account the different needs and abilities of the students in their class so that activities are stimulating and challenging for all students
 - activities are not too complex for students to understand and that staff simplify tasks sufficiently according to students' needs
 - intervention from support staff gives students time to process information and complete tasks independently so that they make the progress of which they are capable.
- Ensure that leaders, managers and governors are rigorous in recording the impact that their actions have on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that they understand precisely which actions are successful and which they need to change.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have continued to maintain a culture of high expectations of both students and staff. They promote constantly realistic, yet challenging, expectations of students, which they share regularly with parents, carers, employers and other stakeholders. As a result, the vast majority of students achieve and several exceed their potential.
- The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and identifies the vast majority of strengths and areas for improvement that inspectors identified. It takes into account all aspects of the provision, including the views of staff and students. As a result, leaders and governors have a good understanding of the college's strengths and areas for improvement. However, leaders do not identify routinely the impact that actions for improvement are having on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They allowed some teachers to implement teaching practices that were ineffective for the student group they were teaching. This led to a decline in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. While they are now taking action to reverse this decline, further improvements are still required for these staff.
- Leaders and governors use funding effectively to provide personalised support and learning opportunities for students, including bespoke training for staff, based on students' needs. Equipment is frequently acquired well in advance of a student's transition into the college and staff receive necessary and appropriately timed training. This ensures that students are fully and immediately supported as soon as they start their learning.
- The curriculum matches the wide range of students' needs, abilities and interests effectively and is successful in helping them to achieve their anticipated destinations. Through clear, challenging and supportive targets, students develop the knowledge and skills they can use successfully in their work placements, for example learning how to care for animals and then working in a pet shop.
- Leaders manage performance efficiently. They identify swiftly and accurately underperformance in both teaching and support staff. They take actions to support staff to help them improve their practices and these actions are focused and monitored regularly. As a result, a number of staff whose performance failed to improve have left the college. Performance management actions for a small minority of current staff have not led to sustained or consistent improvements.
- Leaders and managers have implemented an all-inclusive approach to the appraisal process. This allows all members of staff to provide informative and supportive feedback to each other which helps them understand how they are performing in their roles. Where areas for improvement are identified, comments are constructive and helpful. Staff know what they need to do to improve their performance.
- Leaders provide an extensive range of continuous professional development opportunities for all staff. These equip teachers and support staff with the specialist skills they require to work effectively with students who have very complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Leaders have high expectations of the qualifications that staff should achieve

to work in the college. They support staff appropriately to gain these qualifications. As a result, staff in the college are very well qualified.

- Partnership arrangements are effective. A well-established network of employers provide students with access to an extensive range of work-experience opportunities, enabling them to experience different work options and pathways into employment. The work with the local lifestyle centre provides good opportunities for the supported internship programme. It supports students to develop their confidence and their communication and social skills. Other partnerships provide work-experience placements or work-related opportunities from which all students benefit.

The governance of the provider

- Governors are enthusiastic and are ambitious for the college and its students. They ensure that they understand the college fully through regular and effective well-planned visits to all activities within the college, including lessons. Staff value these visits. The relationship that governors have developed with all staff is good.
- Governors have regular access to pertinent information. This has improved significantly with the recent introduction of an electronic facility that they can access from outside the college at any time. As a result, governors provide improved and effective support and challenge for leaders and all teams in the college. They are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They track underperformance rigorously and celebrate success regularly.
- Under the direction of the new chair of governors, the board has recognised that it needs to take a greater strategic role in the college as well as being a critical friend. As a result, governors have introduced a business-planning process to support college leaders and to check progress against agreed targets. They are reviewing their governance structure and the skills they need to strengthen their capacity to drive up standards. Training for governors is linked directly to gaps in their skills.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding has a high priority throughout the college. Safeguarding processes and procedures are aligned fully to the vulnerability of the students. They ensure that students are kept safe from harm, including from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- All staff and governors receive effective training relating to safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Designated safeguarding staff work effectively with a range of external agencies to respond swiftly to individual safeguarding cases as they arise. Managers ensure that their students are protected from a range of safeguarding concerns, including forced marriages, female genital mutilation and sexual exploitation, through effective monitoring.
- Leaders and managers undertake suitable checks prior to appointing any new members of staff, including volunteers. Records of staff checks are up to date. Leaders require that all checks are completed before a member of staff or volunteer starts to work at the college or has unsupervised access to students.

- Risk assessment processes are effective in keeping students safe in learning activities and when assessing the needs and vulnerability of individual students.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers are ambitious for their students. The large majority set challenging targets in lessons. Multidisciplinary teams, made up of teachers, support staff and therapists, support students successfully during the time they are in college. As a result, the vast majority of students achieve their learning targets and goals. Multidisciplinary teams plan activities that contextualise targets so that students understand readily what they need to do. They track and check progress carefully and frequently to ensure that targets remain appropriate for each student. Consequently, students improve their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Students enjoy their learning. For example, in one lesson, a group of students took part in a music-making task using a variety of instruments. They learned successfully to work together, follow instructions, listen, share and cooperate. The team's ambition was for those students to perform for their peers and, in some cases, with students from other specialist colleges at the public event, 'Party in the Park'.
- Students know how well they are progressing against their targets. They have continual feedback in lessons that is reinforced, for example, in relaxation time and lunch periods. At lunchtime, students have table mats that identify their eating and drinking development targets. These help them to see and understand the progress they are making.
- Staff have a good knowledge of their students. Teachers collect relevant information about their students before they start their course. Their assessment of students' abilities is thorough and helps them to identify accurately the starting point of every student. This means that new students are ready to learn and have goals for their learning from the beginning of their course.
- Teachers integrate English and mathematics successfully into their lessons. Students develop very effective communication skills. They have confidence in using their skills to make choices, express their opinions, work with each other and socialise. For example, in one lesson, a student with autism was able to ask for 'time out' when her anxiety level was growing. Another student used his 'symbolised schedule' to ask for help and to tell staff that he needed personal care.
- Teachers introduce mathematical concepts in ways that students understand. They learn about being on time and in time, and the idea of more or less. Teachers link this effectively to task completion, moving on to the next lesson, and when it is time for break or lunch. For example, in one lesson, students with autism and very complex needs learned successfully about numerical concepts, including starting and finishing a task, moving on to the next step and identifying different shapes and objects. In this lesson, students accurately self-assessed their progress and achievement when they had completed the task.
- The multidisciplinary team approach ensures that barriers to learning are identified quickly and students are able to participate fully in lessons and activities across the whole range of the curriculum. The impact that the multidisciplinary team has on students' progress is

exceptional. Staff at all levels are trained fully in interventions, including strategies for students with autism, and needs relating to mobility support, eating and drinking, and therapeutic support. As a result, staff are able to provide very good help to students in all college locations. For example, one student now has hydrotherapy sessions that have helped him to improve his physical capability considerably. He now takes part in work-skills activities that he could not do previously.

- Many students are able to make progress because staff support them very effectively in using communication strategies that give them a voice. These include the use of assistive technologies, such as eye gaze, and 'symbolised schedules' that help them to identify changes of activity during the day.
- Equality and diversity are promoted successfully and permeate the college. Students have lessons that help them to understand difference and tolerance. In one lesson, two students were learning about the importance of privacy and consent in relationships. Another student, whose preferred language is Welsh, is making progress because staff have learned some words and phrases that she appreciates. When possible, they communicate with her in Welsh.
- In a minority of classroom lessons, activities are too complex for the students to understand, particularly where students are required to complete paper-based activities. Staff do not break down or simplify tasks sufficiently according to students' needs.
- In a minority of lessons, teaching and the deployment of support staff are not matched sufficiently to students' individual needs. As a result, students do not always make enough progress in the lesson.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

- All students have highly comprehensive and detailed behaviour-support plans that are regularly reviewed and updated. Staff apply an excellent range of strategies that ensure students learn how to develop positive behaviours. All staff receive training in proactive, active and reactive behaviour management. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of how best to support students' individual needs. Multidisciplinary team meetings ensure that staff quickly identify and respond effectively to changes in students' behaviour. Consequently, staff provide outstanding support to students to help them control and improve their conduct and actions.
- Students access meaningful and purposeful external work placements. Employers report that they value highly students' contributions to their businesses and that students' work is of a very high standard.
- Students benefit from an excellent range of internal work placements and relevant impartial careers advice and guidance. This enables them to develop the skills they need to progress to the supported internship programme and, where appropriate, recognise their preferred career pathway.
- Students demonstrate very high levels of self-confidence and autonomy in their work-related tasks. For example, in the shop they ensure independently that they place stock in the correct place. Students take great pride in their work. Their standards of work are outstanding. Their understanding of the role they play within the college and/or in their work placement is excellent.

- Students integrate very successfully into the local community and wider society through stimulating additional activities. An excellent range of activities such as dance, swimming and a highly inclusive residential trip to an outdoor activity centre enable students to access activities of interest to all young people. As a result, they develop and practise the behaviours and communication skills they need to become responsible citizens and valued members of society.
- Baseline and work-skills assessments are highly effective in identifying the skills and interests of students. The focus on developing skills such as English, mathematics and communication is very strong. These are integrated very effectively across all aspects of the students' learning. Staff incorporate very skilfully functional English and mathematical skills into work-related activities at an appropriate level, for example helping students to understand the implication of words such as 'more' and 'less', and the importance of being on time.
- Specialist therapies are implemented very effectively to help students make excellent progress, learn new skills, take part in college and community life and increase their confidence. Students improve successfully their balance and mobility by following carefully devised therapy programmes. Each student has a 'fitness passport' that is used appropriately to record progress over time. In one session a student, using his walking frame, was able to get out of his wheelchair and walk with support across the campus to his residence. Over time, he has improved his mobility and stamina and he now takes part successfully in a wider range of activities.
- Transition planning is outstanding. It is comprehensive and carefully timed. Students, parents and carers benefit from an array of support activities such as regular visits to the college before students start, visits to where they will be moving on to, and meetings with the staff who will be supporting them. Staff provide students with very detailed and relevant information that is in an accessible format. As a result, students become increasingly familiar with the transitional process and this reduces their anxiety levels significantly.
- Personal, social and health education lessons focus very effectively on British values, internet safety and relationships. Students develop an excellent understanding of how to protect themselves from risk and how to develop positive relationships with others. They feel safe and fully supported. In information and communication technology lessons, students learn how to stay safe online using the five 'T' principles (technology, time, take care, tricky and tell). Health and safety are given a very high priority in work-experience activities. Students demonstrate exemplary levels of understanding of how to keep themselves safe in the community, the use of personal protective equipment, and safety procedures.
- Communication between the residential houses and the college is very well established. Staff share information appropriately and sensitively, and this actively and successfully promotes the welfare and well-being of residential students. Each residential student is assigned key staff from each setting who meet regularly. This ensures excellent continuity in the support for the student. Any identified needs or issues are addressed swiftly and appropriately.
- The student council is highly effective and central to the students' voices. Students are elected to the student council by their peers. They have a good understanding of how to raise concerns through this forum and feel that their voices are represented and heard.

They make representations confidently to the board of governors, and the 'you said we did' board shows highly positive outcomes from concerns raised by students.

- Students' involvement in their individual care and support plans is exemplary. For example, all students have a consent agreement which, through oral and/or physical responses, gives very clear instructions on how students consent to medical and other interventions.
- Students' attendance and punctuality are excellent. The tutorial system supports students very effectively in preparing them for lessons and attending on time. Where students are absent for medical reasons, leaders ensure that they receive face-to-face teaching and learning at home or in the residences when they are fit enough to learn.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Students are set highly individualised targets that are challenging, appropriate and meet their personal needs and interests. Staff break these targets down into short-term, course and destination goals. Staff track and monitor these targets effectively and adapt and amend them, particularly the short-term goals, in response to students' changing needs. As a result, students make consistently good progress from their very varied and different starting points.
- There are no significant gaps in progress rates among the different groups of students. Programmes are highly personalised and progress relates to individual needs and abilities.
- Students gain relevant knowledge and skills that they transfer to independent living or work environments very successfully when appropriate. For example, students develop good communication skills that help them to make choices and decisions for themselves, particularly around what they want and do not want to do.
- Learning support is tailored precisely to each individual student's needs and it helps them to develop their independence skills. As a result, teachers and support staff are often able to reduce the support students require over time. The effectiveness of the support allows students to do more for themselves.
- Students make at least the expected progress against their milestone targets. These are wide-ranging and include listening and comprehension, speaking and expression, writing, reading, numeracy, shapes and spaces, measurement, and behaviour. Staff monitor students against other measures, such as eating and drinking independently. College data shows that the majority of students are making appropriate progress towards these additional targets.
- The vast majority of students continue to progress to destinations in line with their long-term goals. Where funding and support allow, students' internal progress to their next stage of learning is good. Through the effective supported internship programme, a small minority of students have progressed successfully into paid employment.
- Students enjoy their lessons and work-related activities. They are keen to attend college and participate in lessons to the best of their ability.
- For the vast majority of the provision, leaders use management information effectively to monitor students' achievements. This relates to activities that do not lead to formal qualifications. However, the management of information relating to the achievement of

formal qualifications requires improvement. During the inspection, there were discrepancies between inspectors' information and what leaders and managers believed students had achieved.

- In a minority of sessions, staff are too eager to intervene to help students with their learning. They do not give them sufficient time to think through and find a solution to the question or problem themselves. As a result, these students do not make the consistent progress of which they are capable.

Provider details

| | |
|---|--|
| Unique reference number | 139218 |
| Type of provider | Independent specialist college |
| Age range of learners | 19+ |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | 80 |
| CEO | Mr Mark Geraghty |
| Telephone number | 0161 610 0100 |
| Website | www.seashelltrust.org.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 or above | |
|---|------------------|-----|----------|-----|---------|-----|------------------|-----|
| | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ |
| Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships) | - | 75 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 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 | 73 | | | | | | | |
| At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors: | - | | | | | | | |

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of college, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the college'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 college.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Suzanne Wainwright, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Gillian Paterson | Ofsted Inspector |
| Maggie Thompson | Ofsted Inspector |

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