

Dorincourt Centre

**Inspection of FEFC-funded provision in
non-sector establishments for students with
learning difficulties and/or disabilities**

October 2000

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
2000-01**

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to secure provision for individual students in England with learning difficulties and/or disabilities where sector provision is inadequate. When it exercises this duty, the Council makes a contract with the establishment making the provision. The contract includes the right of inspection.

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 024 76863000
Fax 024 76863100
Website www.fefc.ac.uk*

©FEFC 2000. You may photocopy this report. A college may use its report in promotional material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings of the inspection are not misrepresented.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are described in Council Circulars 97/12 and 97/22. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and other aspects of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses*
- *grade 2 - good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses*
- *grade 4 - less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- *grade 5 - poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses*

Contents

	Paragraph
Summary	
The establishment and its mission	1
The inspection	6
The curriculum	8
Other aspects of provision	15
Conclusions	21

Summary

Independent Establishment 06/00

Inspection of FEFC-Funded Provision in the non-sector establishment for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Dorincourt Centre, Surrey

Inspected October 2000

The Dorincourt Centre in Leatherhead, Surrey provides accommodation, further education, and training for adults with physical disabilities. Some have associated learning difficulties. The college is unable to cater for students with severe learning or behavioural difficulties, those with no sight or those requiring continuous nursing care. At the time of the inspection, there were forty-five residents, of whom three were students funded by the FEFC, all aged 19 or over.

The centre aims to provide a curriculum which trains and equips students to achieve their best potential academically as well as developing their skills for independent living. Its major strength is the effective preparation which residents receive for more independent and successful adult lives. The centre is particularly successful at teaching residents to make choices and decisions. Much of the artwork undertaken by residents is good and some is outstanding. The centre is now enrolling students from the local community on courses such as pottery, ceramics and painting. This provides residents with improved opportunities

for integration in activities in the local area.

Since the previous inspection the college has introduced an effective programme of training for students so that they learn how to reserve in advance the services of personal assistants and how to manage and direct them to meet their own requirements. Students' programmes have a group of non-negotiable subjects selected to meet students' learning needs. Some progress has been made in setting more clearly defined learning goals for students and in improving the coherence of their programmes.

However, the centre has not yet developed a baseline assessment to enable staff to develop an accurate picture of students' skills and knowledge at the beginning of their course. They cannot therefore assess accurately or record students' progress. This significant weakness, which was also identified in the previous inspection report, was noted in the centre's self-assessment report.

The self-assessment report produced for the inspection was the first to be undertaken by the college. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified and with the centre's judgement of the overall quality of its work.

The work funded by the FEFC was judged to be satisfactory, with strengths and some weaknesses, and was awarded a grade 3.

Context

The establishment and its mission

1 Dorincourt centre, to be known in the future as Queen Elizabeth's Foundation Development Centre, is on the outskirts of Leatherhead. It provides residential accommodation for people with a physical disability. Some residents have lived at Dorincourt for many years. Others are students who attend a two or three year course before moving on to a more independent adult life. All but two residents take part in courses and activities based in the centre. Forty-five places are available. At the time of the inspection, the Further Education Funding Council contributed to the funding of three students, all aged nineteen or over.

2 Dorincourt was purpose built as a centre for people with physical disabilities. Most of the residents are accommodated in single bedsitting rooms. A new residential block of single occupancy flats now provides opportunities for some students to live more independently and cater for themselves during the week. Meals are provided in the cafeteria-style dining room. Kitchens are located in different parts of the residential accommodation for students to make their own meals as part of the development of more independent living skills. The on-site Oak Lawn Gallery, which is open to the public, is a showcase for fine arts and crafts produced by the students and by local artists.

3 Dorincourt is part of the Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People and is run within its overall management structure and policy

framework. The principal is accountable within this management structure.

4 All the residents have physical disabilities, particularly those related to mobility and communication. Many have some degree of associated learning difficulty. The centre was formerly a long-term residential home and some longstanding residents continue to live there. Many, however, have moved on to more independent accommodation since the previous inspection. Many long-term residents used to be employed in an industrial workshop at Bradmere House, in Leatherhead. Only two are now employed there. The centre now caters mainly for young adults who are making the transition to a more independent adult life. Many have previously attended residential special schools and other specialist independent provision for students with disabilities. The centre does not cater for those with severe learning difficulties, severe behavioural difficulties and severe visual impairments. Extensive nursing care is not provided.

5 A wide range of specialist facilities are available to residents. These include: specially designed flats and training areas to teach skills for independent living; improved access to information technology; adapted classrooms and art studios; physiotherapy, aromatherapy and occupational therapy facilities; and access to a range of leisure and sports opportunities. Twenty-four hour care and support are provided by care staff. In addition, the college operates an

Context

innovative system of training students to use personal assistants to provide effective personal support.

The Inspection

6 The inspection was carried out by two inspectors over three days. They observed twelve lessons and other activities where students were learning. Discussions with the principal, the students and members of staff informed inspectors' judgements. Students' work and college documentation, including students files, were examined.

7 The self-assessment produced for the inspection was the first to be undertaken by the college. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified and with the centre's judgement of the overall quality of its work.

The Curriculum

Grade profile of lessons observed

Grade	1	2	3	4	5
Number of lessons	0	2	7	2	1

8 Students have a core programme which is now based more clearly on their goals for the end of their course. Students can choose from over fifty additional courses and activities. These include ceramics, basic skills, papier-mâché, watercolour and other forms of painting, desktop publishing, life skills, which includes money management, travel training and communication. They can also enrol for courses at local FEFC-funded colleges, including a local college of art and design.

9 The timetable is based on a two-weekly cycle, so that students sometimes have a particular session only once a fortnight, for one hour. Those students who need intensive basic skills teaching or the development of essential life skills do not receive enough sessions each week for them to make sufficient progress. This weakness was noted in the previous inspection report. Some students are confused by the two-weekly timetable.

10 As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the diversity of the curriculum sometimes lead to students' programmes and timetables lacking coherence. Students are not always aware of how their current activities relate to their longer-term goals. The activities on students' programmes

offered by different departments are not co-ordinated. This weakness, which leads to some fragmentation of the students' programmes, was not recognised in the self-assessment report.

11 The percentage of lessons judged to be good or outstanding was low compared to the national average as recorded in *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-9: Chief inspector's annual report*. Three of the twelve sessions observed were less than satisfactory. Students' attendance in lessons was almost 100%. Students work mainly in small groups of between two and eight, with some larger groups for appropriate activities. A number of sessions were used for one-to-one tuition. The college recognised some of the strengths and weaknesses of its teaching and learning in its self-assessment report. Inspectors noted additional strengths and weaknesses.

12 The centre has not yet developed a baseline assessment to enable staff to have an accurate picture of students' skills, knowledge and future goals at the beginning of their course. Teachers have insufficient information about students' knowledge and levels of ability and cannot accurately assess or record students' progress. This significant weakness,

The Curriculum

which was also identified in the previous inspection report, is noted in the self-assessment report. An assessment package is currently being developed but this work has not yet been completed or piloted.

13 Standards of teaching in the art department were good. Some effective lessons included pottery and watercolour painting, in which adult education students from the local community joined students from Dorincourt. In a purposeful lesson on directing a personal assistant properly, a variety of teaching methods were used to help students learn to give clear instructions while being courteous and fair.

14 In the least effective lessons, students' individual learning needs were not taken into account in group activities, resulting in students losing interest or learning very little.

Other Aspects of Provision

15 Inspectors agree with the self-assessment that students are well supported at Dorincourt. The wide range of specialist personnel and facilities are deployed and used effectively. Students are well known as individuals and their views and choices are taken seriously. Many learn to manage their own support effectively.

16 There is good provision for students to make choices about leisure and recreation. Regular events are run by the leisure services department. Students have weekly choices of visits to the cinema, the theatre, museums, concerts, sporting events and other places of interest. They can also choose from a range of activities which can be provided on site during the evenings and at weekends. The centre recognises this strength in its self-assessment report.

17 Resources are of good quality. Teaching rooms are well adapted for students' learning, well equipped and have easy access for wheelchair users. Good software packages are available for desktop publishing, art and design and communications. The older residential accommodation is of a satisfactory standard, although the design is now dated. As it is to be replaced by a new building, it has not recently been redecorated or refurbished. The new residential block of single occupancy flats is outstanding in design and in the high quality of its construction, decoration and furnishing.

18 Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People is governed by an executive committee. Its educational work is overseen by the college committee.

19 Dorincourt is a complex organisation, employing thirteen teaching and sixty-four care staff to meet the different needs of forty-five residents and students who cover a wide age range, and have very different needs and aspirations. It is run efficiently within the overall management structure and policy framework of Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People. As demonstrated in the self-assessment report, the management structure is clear and the centre has a clear mission statement and business plan.

20 Quality assurance systems have developed since the previous inspection. The centre has gained Investors in People status. A programme of lesson observation has been implemented but this is not yet centre-wide. Inspectors agree with the self-assessment report in judging that the quality assurance systems are not yet sufficiently focused on subject content and learning outcomes and are not yet sufficiently rigorous.

Conclusions

21 Key strengths

- effective preparation of students for more independent and successful adult lives
- successful teaching of students to make choices and decisions
- high-quality art and creative work
- good training of students to make effective use of personal assistants
- wide-ranging, high-quality support for students.

22 Weaknesses

- lack of a baseline assessment to provide accurate information of students' skills, knowledge and future goals at the beginning of their course.
- insufficient evidence of the gains made by students during their programme
- insufficient time allocated to the key elements of some students' programmes
- some ineffective teaching
- lack of co-ordination of all elements of students' programmes and of the departments which offer them.