

# **Minstead Training Project**

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

**January 2000**

**REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
1999-00**

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

**Minstead Training Project  
Minstead, Hampshire**

**Inspected January 2000**

***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.*

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## **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*

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# Summary

## **Independent Establishment 12/2000**

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

#### **Minstead Training Project Minstead, Hampshire**

#### **Inspected January 2000**

The Minstead Training Project is based in the village of Minstead in the New Forest. It provides programmes in life and social skills, horticulture, wood and craftwork, catering, literacy, numeracy and information technology. The project has a clear Christian ethos. It accepts each student as an individual with a contribution to make and needs to develop. There are currently 46 students on the project, of whom two are funded by the FEFC.

The college has produced a thorough and detailed self-assessment report which follows the framework laid out in Circular 97/12 *Validating Self Assessment*. All staff have contributed to the self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed overall with the strengths and weaknesses identified, but considered that the project had not recognised some additional weaknesses that affected teaching, learning and student achievement.

The project aims to improve students' quality of life by developing their maturity, self-respect and independence. It aims to achieve this

by providing opportunities for them to develop new skills through vocational and basic skills courses. Vocational staff and residential staff contribute to these areas of students' development.

A strength of the project is its individualised approach towards students. This is based on its strong ethos and underlying values about the worth of each person. The project is effective in increasing students' confidence and independence. It is also successful in enabling them to achieve vocational qualifications in horticulture and to progress to more advanced courses. There are effective links with sector colleges which extend the range of courses available to students. The project has very good residential accommodation, and high-quality resources for vocational and practical learning. Staff communicate effectively through a network of formal meetings and informal discussions. They know their students well.

Assessment procedures are underdeveloped. Students' programmes are not sufficiently informed by a purposeful initial assessment. Ongoing assessment is not consistent or effective and is not used to record progress that is made or inform the planning of further work. Although each student has an individual learning programme, this does not always detail the student's main needs. The implementation of these programmes is not based on detailed learning objectives and, consequently, fails to ensure that the most effective learning takes place.

# Summary

The teaching of basic literacy and numeracy is underdeveloped and insufficient time is allocated to this important area. The development of independent living skills is not supported by a curriculum framework.

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

# Context

## **The Establishment and its Mission**

1 The Minstead Training Project is based at Minstead Lodge in the village of Minstead, near Lyndhurst, in the New Forest. Minstead Lodge is situated in seventeen acres of pasture and ornamental and kitchen gardens. This is the main teaching base for the project. A further three acres in the village is used for nursery growing and as a base for the sale of plants to the public. Residential accommodation for students is in Minstead Lodge and in the Bothy, a detached house in the grounds of the lodge. The project was started in 1986 to provide residential and day services, care and training in work, life and social skills to young people who have learning disabilities. The project is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. The charity has two trustees, one of whom visits the project monthly. They receive minutes of staff meetings, see the project in operation and have discussion with the director and administrator. The project is managed by a director who has overall responsibility for its educational and residential development. He is supported in this responsibility by regular meetings with staff. The project provides programmes in life and social skills, horticulture, wood and craftwork, catering, and literacy, numeracy and information technology. Each of these programme areas has a team leader or co-ordinator who is responsible to the project director.

2 The project has a clear mission statement to provide responsive training in work, life and social skills to people who have learning disabilities, thus

enabling them to realise their full potential and achieve a level of independence appropriate to their ability. This statement is shared with students and staff. The project is a Christian establishment and seeks to maintain the ethos of love and care for one another throughout its work. It is open to young people of all faiths. The students are aged from 16, although most are over 21. All students have significant learning difficulties and some have additional emotional and behavioural or communication difficulties. The project aims to improve students' quality of life by developing their maturity, self-respect and independence. It also aims to give students opportunities to achieve new skills and meet new challenges in all areas of their lives. Work experience is provided on-site and through the landscaping and garden maintenance services provided by the project's contracts teams. Work experience is also provided with local employers. Many students also attend on a part-time basis one of the several local sector colleges that have well-established connections with the project.

3 There are 46 full and part-time students on the project, of whom 14 are residential. Two of the residential students are funded by the FEFC. Following an initial two-week trial stay students may be offered a place. The first three months of this placement is seen as a probationary period. All students have individual programmes designed to meet their needs from the range of opportunities available.



# Context

## The Inspection

4 The inspection was carried out by two inspectors over two days. Observation of teaching and learning was undertaken in horticulture, literacy and numeracy sessions. Informal observation was also made in the times between the formal teaching sessions and in the residential accommodation. In addition, inspectors' judgements were informed by meetings with the director, the team leader for horticulture, the head of care, tutors for literacy, numeracy and information technology, a key instructor and a key worker. Students' views were obtained. Inspectors examined project documentation, including details of student's assessments, and planning and review meetings.

5 The college's self-assessment report is thorough and detailed. It follows the framework outlined in Council Circular 97/12 *Validating Self Assessment*. Strengths and areas for improvement are identified, together with the source of evidence for the judgements made. An action plan has been formulated to address those areas perceived to be in need of improvement.

# The Curriculum

6 All of the teaching was at least satisfactory and some teaching was good. The most effective teaching occurred when the learning was clearly related to real learning requirements. For example, for one student learning about area in a numeracy session, the teacher based his learning on the dimensions of flowerbeds. This related directly to the student's horticulture work. Teachers keep students involved in learning by progressing through a variety of activities, moving from one activity to another at an appropriate pace. Teachers know their students well and use this knowledge sensitively to inform their work. For example, one student who has limited self-confidence was encouraged to do things for himself. Teaching was less effective when the teacher inappropriately limited the student's independence by being too directive. For example, in one instance the teacher drew margins for the student and told him, step by step, what and where to write. Other weaknesses in teaching were the failure of teachers to check sufficiently on students' learning before moving to the next activity and insufficient planning of the expected learning outcomes, both resulting in less efficient and effective use of students' time.

7 The project's approach to education and personal development is to accept each student as an individual with a contribution to make and needs to develop. The project provides individual programmes based on a clear understanding of these learning

needs. These programmes include vocational learning as well as aspects of personal and social development. This understanding is also informed by the staff's shared view of the purpose of the project and their commitment to maintaining its strong Christian ethos and values. Staff aim to ensure that students progress not only within their programmes but also to more advanced courses. They work hard to develop students' independence, moving students on to more independent opportunities both in the project and in the local and wider community. The project is aware of these strengths.

8 There is good achievement on vocational courses. The project also has a significant effect on students' personal development. It is successful in developing their confidence and self-esteem. For example, students have progressed from NVQ level I to level II in Amenity Horticulture. They have also become increasingly skilled in independent living, moving, for example, from accommodation in the lodge to the Bothy, a self-contained house within the grounds. The project's self-assessment appropriately identified the achievement of its students as a strength.

9 Assessment is underdeveloped. Consistent and rigorous procedures are not yet in place to identify students' main needs when they first attend the project. There is no effective ongoing assessment which shows any progress being made or informs the planning of further work. Literacy and numeracy

# The Curriculum

programmes are informed by initial basic skills assessments but the value of this assessment is limited since it is not based upon the likely needs of students' vocational courses. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is not usually based on clear learning objectives. There are, however, clear instances of effective co-operation when staff have asked the basic skills teacher to concentrate on particular aspects which are causing students to have problems in their vocational studies, such as an understanding of weights and measures. However, even when literacy and numeracy have been identified as important areas for development, far too little time of only one hour a week is allowed for this work. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are not developed in other areas of the vocational or residential curriculum. The project is not sufficiently aware that there are significant weaknesses in its assessment practice and did not identify the need for development of its literacy and numeracy programme.

10 As the project identified, its links with FEFC sector colleges are effective. They allow students to widen their individual programmes as well as contribute to their growth in independence. The two students funded by the FEFC are currently attending Sparsholt College, a local specialist land-based sector college. They attend for one day each week as part of an NVQ level II course in amenity horticulture. NVQ courses are also available through links with local sector colleges in commercial

horticulture and in catering and hospitality. National Proficiency Tests Council accreditation is available in horticulture, workshop practice, literacy and numeracy and independent living skills.

11 There is no stated curriculum framework for the development of independent living skills. Individual targets in this area of work are set at review meetings and are based on the key worker's knowledge of the student. The student is involved in this target setting. Some of these targets, for example, 'to operate an automatic washing machine' are specific and allow progress to be easily seen. However, many targets are too general and do not allow progress to be readily assessed. Students can achieve accredited qualifications and/or the development of these independent living skills through the National Proficiency Tests Council Vocational Foundation Certificate. The self-assessment report did not give sufficient attention to the development of students' living skills.

12 The very good relationships which staff have with students contributes to their personal development, in particular in their growth in confidence and self-esteem. There is effective communication by all members of staff about students' individual needs through regular review and planning meetings and frequent formal and informal discussions.

# The Curriculum

13 There is a rigorous cycle of annual individual planning meetings, with six monthly interim review meetings. A key consideration of these review meetings is a student's 'employability'. These meetings are appropriately informed by the staff's detailed knowledge of individual students. However, insufficient consideration is then given to planning an appropriate learning programme. Important areas for development are not explicitly included in these programmes. For example, even though confidence and self-esteem were considered to be important areas of development for one student, these were not specifically included on the student's programme. Although lessons are planned, the plans are based on activities to be undertaken, rather than the learning objectives and expected learning outcomes required for a student to meet the aims outlined in their programme. Similarly, records of lessons involve the activities undertaken by the students and do not record the progress they make.

tutors to collate assessment towards accreditation requirements.

14 Key instructors and key workers are responsible, respectively for the vocational and residential aspects of students' development and maintain an overview of individual students' learning programmes. There is regular discussion between these members of staff. However, there is no detailed plan as to how they will jointly work towards students' individual learning programmes. The key instructors are NVQ assessors and liaise closely with the sector college

## Other Aspects of Provision

15 The project has a practical approach to students' learning and an appropriate base and facilities for its achievement. This is a strength. The facilities of the site and the additional opportunities available through its horticultural contract work and the project's nursery allow learning to take place in real situations. These facilities provide opportunities for students to apply and extend their learning through work experience. Further opportunities are available through the catering section, where students are involved in food preparation for students, staff and visitors.

16 The students' accommodation is of high quality and contributes to their personal development. Each residential unit caters for two or three students. Study bedrooms are spacious and personalised. They reflect the students' developing adult status. Shared kitchen and lounge areas provide real opportunities for them to develop and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding of independent living in real social situations. Students undertake domestic duties within their residential unit, enabling further development of their independent living skills.

17 There is a well-established annual staff appraisal procedure. This is managed by the project director and informed by teaching observation by team leaders. Each appraisal session involves detailed discussion and is recorded. This process is not fully effective in realising its aim to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning. There are no

explicit criteria, for example, in assessment practice and in teaching against which quality can be judged and staff development planned.

18 The director manages the project effectively. He is well informed about the work of all students, attending or receiving notes from all planning and interim review meetings. The project is developing a broad-based quality assurance framework that has self-assessment at its core. This process involves all members of staff and is proving to be effective in bringing about change and improvement. The self-assessment framework itself is evolving from a generic approach into one that meets the specific needs of the project. However the absence of clear standards and targets against which to measure improvement and progress does limit its effectiveness. Furthermore, the project does not have an external advisory group which can offer critical appraisal, advice and support to the development of the project.

# Conclusions

## 19 Key Strengths

- success in developing students' self confidence and independence
- good achievement and progression on vocational courses
- practical learning programmes based on the needs of individual students
- strong ethos, based on valuing the individual
- effective communication between staff through formal and informal meetings

## 20 Weaknesses

- underdeveloped assessment procedures as a basis for identifying students' main learning objectives
- underdeveloped individual learning programmes
- insufficient time allocated to the teaching of basic skills
- the lack of an overall curriculum framework to guide the development of personal and independent living skills