

St Martin's Centre (St Rose's School)

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates

6–8 December 2016

Overall effectiveness Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
Provision for learners with high needs	Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Students' progress in developing their communication skills is outstanding. This is as a result of good support and teaching and the excellent use of specialist technology.
- Students enjoy their learning greatly and value highly the supportive relationships that they develop with teaching and support staff.
- Governors and trustees are ambitious for the students and the college. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision well and provide good support and challenge for managers.
- A strong leadership team oversees the quality of the provision effectively and promotes a powerful culture of continuous improvement so that the centre is continuing to improve. However, managers do not always use students' views as a means of improving provision.
- Highly skilled staff develop effective personalised learning programmes by finding out what the students like and what will help them progress well. However, managers do not capture all the progress made by students across all of the activities undertaken at St Martin's.
- Staff are particularly good at setting students individually tailored tasks in lessons so that they are stretched and challenged. However, teaching does not promote all aspects of equality sufficiently well.
- Very experienced specialist therapists work closely with teachers to ensure that students get highly effective support and treatment to manage their complex physical needs.
- Staff promote high expectations of students, whom they place at the centre of provision.

Full report

Information about the provider

- St Martin's Centre is an independent specialist college of further education for young adults aged 19 to 25 who have physical and learning disabilities. Established in 2013 by the trustees (The English Congregation of St Catherine of Siena), the college began taking students in September 2013. It is a Catholic college which welcomes students from all faiths and none. The students all have physical or sensory disabilities and/or communication difficulties. Most have severe or profound learning difficulties and complex medical needs. At present, all students work at or below level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework.
- Students come from Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire, Swindon, Wiltshire, Bristol, Staffordshire and Wales. Some students are fortnightly residential; others are day students with access to short breaks provided by St Martin's. At the time of the inspection, there were 11 students enrolled on programmes.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Develop the promotion of equality and diversity throughout the learning programmes so that all aspects are covered and students are better prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Build on the recording of progress so that:
 - students' progress across all areas of their learning programmes, including work-related learning, enrichment activities and incidental learning outside college time, is captured
 - managers can easily monitor the progress of all students and students continue to receive the right support at the right time to continue successfully with their studies.
- Improve the ways that managers use students' views to help improve the provision by:
 - collecting, analysing and using their feedback to drive improvements
 - ensuring students are aware of the importance of their contribution.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have used their good skills and knowledge to create a strong governance structure and leadership team. Although the principal and vice-principal are relatively new in post, they have been at the college for many years and know the provision very well. The senior management team is very experienced and ensures that day-to-day management is good across the residential and education provision.
- Leaders and managers successfully promote a strong ethos of continuous improvement. Staff are very responsive to feedback and are keen to drive standards higher. Managers check carefully on the quality of provision and conduct regular audits and frequent observations to improve teaching and learning. For example, feedback to teachers has improved the way that they involve students in assessing their own achievements.
- Leaders and managers use performance management systems effectively to drive improvements. They have developed a detailed strategic plan and they provide highly effective supervision for staff. All staff receive detailed appraisals of their performance and these are used very effectively to set targets that link well to the plan. Staff are loyal and feel part of a valued team and often stay at the centre for many years.
- Highly experienced and skilled staff work successfully as part of a strong team providing good support for the students. They are passionate about their work and they contribute well to target setting and care plans. They make effective use of education, health and care plans so that clear targets are used in students' learning plans which accurately reflect their individual needs.
- Regular and effective meetings ensure that there are frequent discussions about the best way to teach and support the students. Staff are well trained in e-safety and safeguarding including the 'Prevent' duty. Staff are confident to have discussions with students about these areas and this helps to promote a safe and secure environment within the college.
- Managers and staff provide a very wide range of programmes and activities to match the individual interests of students. Programmes focus well on preparing students for their next steps in learning. Study programmes include personal and social development, employability skills and problem solving as well as mathematics, English and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Good partnerships with colleges, local schools, employers and voluntary organisations benefit students by giving them diverse opportunities to fulfil their potential and increase their understanding of life in modern Britain. A few students attend local schools and colleges for specific courses such as A level politics.
- Equality and diversity are mostly promoted well and leaders do not tolerate prejudiced or unfair behaviour. Equality in the area of disability is very well promoted while others areas such as gender, race, religion and sexual orientation are given less attention. A few lessons in the past have used useful resources to promote students' understanding but little promotion was seen during the inspection in lessons.
- Leaders and managers ensure that students' needs are central to the learning

programmes and that students have a clear voice at the college. The views of students who attend the student forum are recorded and views are heard through one- to- one work. However, it is not clear how the college makes use of this information to help improve the provision.

The governance of the provider

- Very experienced governors use their knowledge well to provide good challenge and support to managers. Governors and trustees promote a strong ethos of continuous improvement and they support the staff well to drive standards higher. They play a powerful role in setting the strategic direction and they are ambitious for the future of the centre.
- Managers provide informative reports to the governors. Governors use their skills well to provide a good oversight of the provision, with several of them undertaking unannounced visits with a specific focus, such as safeguarding. They provide valuable reports to the board that lead to improvements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is given a high priority. A highly committed team of staff meets regularly to reflect on all aspects of safeguarding practice, including the 'Prevent' duty, so that staff remain vigilant and the strong focus is sustained. They have a good working relationship with the local safeguarding boards. Consequently, all staff are well informed on safeguarding matters.
- Safer recruitment practices are carefully followed and detailed records are maintained of staff vetting checks, and on the safeguarding training staff have undertaken. Safeguarding practice is regularly audited and staff are quick to identify and implement good practice. Staff carefully undertake risk assessments for the care of individual students and also on the activities that they carry out. As a result, students are in a safe environment.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and managers design very good individual programmes for students that include a wide variety of different elements to meet and develop their interests. This includes a good range of sports, drama, horticultural work, voluntary work, involvement in community projects and charitable activities, music, politics and art. Students value the time staff take to find out what they like and the way learning programmes are tailored to their needs.
- Skilled and knowledgeable teachers have high expectations of students. Specialist therapists and teachers jointly establish students' starting points from which to measure progress. Detailed and thorough assessments provide a clear picture of students' needs that are used well to build on what they have achieved and set challenging learning goals. Staff communicate well with parents and value their involvement in supporting

students' learning.

- Education staff make very good use of specialist technology. Students with severely restricted physical movement learn, in some cases for the first time, to give information and hold discussions using an eye-gaze system that enables students to control their computers using only their eyes. Others become very skilled at typing into their computers to give information and make choices and answer questions.
- A high ratio of staff to students together with very effective and unobtrusive help enables students to be as independent as possible. Almost all students use wheelchairs to assist their daily living and teachers make sure assistants are clear about exactly how much support to provide to develop students' independence and prevent over-reliance on staff. Staff carefully adhere to the principles within the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and work hard to ensure that students are able to make decisions and exercise choices.
- A very experienced team of specialist therapists provides students with highly effective therapeutic support to manage their complex physical needs. Speech and language therapists devise individual programmes to help students develop ways of communicating their choices and views. Regular physiotherapy, hydrotherapy and massage reduce students' pain and discomfort successfully so that they are ready to learn.
- Therapists and teachers keep detailed records of progress and use these to prepare very informative termly reviews which students and parents appreciate. Students are empowered to prepare computer presentations on their achievements and their plans for the future and take responsibility for introducing these at the start of reviews.
- Teachers integrate English and mathematics well into learning activities and make substantial use of ICT to increase students' experience of the world, promote communication and support independence. Teachers work carefully with students and teaching assistants to set interesting tasks and challenging individual targets in lessons. Students achieve well in mathematics and English.
- Teachers give encouraging verbal feedback to students at the end of each class on how well they achieved their individual targets and what to focus on next. However, a few staff still occasionally use terms that are inappropriate to young adults when giving verbal feedback.
- The teaching and learning of the awareness of disability are very good, but other aspects of equality and diversity are not referred to often enough to develop students' understanding. A small number of students become successful ambassadors for the promotion of equality and diversity by contributing to training and awareness-raising events in relation to disability.
- Assessment and recording of progress is good but separate systems are used to capture learning, which makes it complicated to monitor. The college is in the process of developing an overall system for recording students' progress across all parts of their programmes, including work-related learning, enrichment activities and incidental learning but this has not yet been implemented.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Students enjoy their learning greatly and value the teaching and support staff highly. They extend the range of their interests and communicate more freely. They get to know themselves and others better and make friends, sometimes for the first time. Students' attendance at lessons is good.
- Students develop skills in English, mathematics and ICT and appreciate the importance of these skills to their lives. Students concentrate hard, make considerable efforts to learn and greatly enjoy the progress they make. As a result, they produce good-quality work that they are proud of.
- Students particularly enjoy their increasing skill with phonics as they see its value in helping them to use the technology that gives them a voice. Non-verbal students with very complex needs derive great enjoyment from the sensory programmes that introduce them to a wide range of experiences and sensations that enrich their lives and increase their ability to make choices.
- Students gain confidence in staying away from home overnight, become reliably continent overnight and enjoy a residential activity week with staff from college. They become confident enough to spend time away from home and as a result a few students are able to move into supported housing with confidence.
- Students who are able benefit from external work placements and gain good employability skills. Most students become more able to make decisions, set their own targets and voice their own opinions. They learn how to greet people appropriately and contribute well to the workplace by undertaking tasks that are valuable to their employers. For example, students learn how to put books into alphabetical order and how to put price tags on goods that are for sale.
- Students gain more control over their lives. They become more able to make choices between activities and develop confidence in their own judgements. Students with more complex needs learn how to use simpler forms of technology well without having to rely on other people. For example, they learn to control music tracks using a simple switch.
- Students improve their mental health through their enjoyment of the extensive well-kept grounds, greenhouse, sensory garden and sensory room. Students value their specialist therapies for the way they help them to keep fit and support them to manage their anxieties.
- Students feel safe and have a good understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet. An external consultant provides good individual mentoring to students experiencing problems or anxieties about intimate relationships. Students trust the staff to sort out any concerns that they have and staff are very responsive.
- Students use specialist, well-informed and experienced guidance from managers to make choices about the next stage of their education and lives. A few students have access to good information, advice and guidance from an external consultant but this is at an early stage of development.
- Students learn how to share and respect others' needs and views. Staff promote values of respect and tolerance well through frequent group discussions, and the enrichment

activities in the local community prepare students well for their future lives in society.

Outcomes for learners

Outstanding

- Expectations for all students are high and they achieve outstanding outcomes. Students make sustained progress from their different starting points particularly with the achievement of communication skills.
- Students use technology extremely well for learning and for speaking. For example, students make very good progress in using phonics with their specialist eye-gaze technology and this in turn improves their communication skills and motivation to learn.
- Students are inspired and enjoy learning and make very good progress relative to their starting points. They become happier and smile more often. Students learn how to manage their anxieties and become calmer. Massage is used very effectively so that students' pain is reduced, their muscle tone improves and they become more comfortable.
- Students attain their challenging learning targets. In some cases, this includes qualifications and most understand the skills they have acquired. Students develop good concentration.
- Students develop a very keen interest in music. An excellent orchestra has been formed and students perform at events and they develop greater self-esteem by taking part.
- Students are well equipped for an interesting life in the community when they leave by experiencing activities that support their interests.
- Most students become more independent in their everyday lives and become less reliant on parents for their personal care. Students gain skills such as learning how to make drinks, dress and undress themselves. Students' next steps are varied according to personal circumstances. For example, one student progressed to a supported internship and another moved into supported living, while others have returned home but with greatly improved independent living skills and self-assurance.
- Students improve their ability to relax and gain great enjoyment and exercise by swimming in the on-site hydrotherapy pool. Students increase their understanding of instructions and numeracy by counting the number of gentle bounces on the trampoline. Students' muscles strengthen, posture improves and they become more able to concentrate for longer periods of time.
- Students achieve greater dignity and an improved quality of life. Very good nursing support enables students to become less anxious about medical care so that they are willing to have necessary injections and have blood tests without undue anxiety. Students gain understanding about their own bodies and how to manage their personal needs such as going to the toilet unaided or applying skincare cream.
- New students settle very well and quickly realise what they can achieve. Parents and carers state how impressed they are with the very calm and enriching environment and report how their sons or daughters make smooth transitions and achieve significant and rapid improvements in their independence and communication skills.

Provider details

Unique reference number	139250
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	15
Principal	Sheila Talwar
Telephone number	01453 763793
Website	http://stroses.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+
	N/A	11	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	None							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	11							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous monitoring 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

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