

Condover College

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent specialist college

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Condoover College Limited is registered as an industrial and provident society. It is a small independent specialist residential college in Shropshire providing for learners aged 18 years and over with severe learning difficulties. Most have additional complex needs including visual impairment, profound physical disabilities, hearing loss, communication and challenging behaviour. There are currently 21 learners funded by the LSC. Learners undertake a pre-entry programme of education for two or three years. Education programmes are based at Grafton within a purpose-adapted facility that opened in November 2007. Learners' programmes are intended to develop their communication, independence, functional and personal skills. The college aims to provide 'a transition between school and adult life for young adults with a visual impairment and profound and multiple disabilities that is designed to maximise potential and independence'.

The college was inspected in May 2008 and was judged to be inadequate. The college improved the effectiveness of provision and was judged to be satisfactory at the reinspection in May 2009. Since the reinspection the college has appointed a new head of education. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

Has self assessment and quality improvement planning improved since the last inspection?

Insufficient progress

At the last inspection the self assessment report was judged to be broadly accurate but was not sufficiently analytical and action plans lacked rigour. The college have improved self assessment processes and now fully involves all staff in evaluating college performance. The 2008/09 draft self assessment report covers all aspects of the new common inspection framework and evidence to support the judgments is drawn from quality assurance processes and staff input. However, judgements are in many cases unsubstantiated by robust evidence and too reliant on anecdotal information. Although the quality improvement plan clearly identifies actions to address areas for improvement, there are insufficient key performance targets identified to enable the college to continually and successfully monitor the progress being made. The college are effectively addressing the need to include learners' views in self assessment but these are not included in the 2008/09 draft report.

Outcomes for learners

Have outcomes for learners improved since the last inspection? Do learners have clear long term goals identified and is progress towards these effectively tracked?

Insufficient progress

During 2008/09 more learners had more opportunities and gained full and part qualifications in their independence and communication skills development. The recording of learners' progress towards their long term goals, numeracy and work related skills was underdeveloped at the time of the last inspection. Long term goals are still not sufficiently clear to ensure that progress is effectively tracked or measured. Individual objectives are reviewed and summarised at least termly. However, in a few cases individual learner's short term objectives already recorded and achieved are still being included within lesson planning. Therefore, in these cases, learners' skills are not being sufficiently developed at an appropriate pace.

Quality of provision

Has planning for learning improved since the last inspection? Insufficient progress

Although teaching and learning was judged to be satisfactory overall at the last inspection too much teaching focused on the completion of a task rather than on meeting individual learner's needs. Lesson plans now include learners' individual learning objectives. Useful strategies are identified to support learning matched to individual learner's needs. However, these are not consistently implemented to ensure all learners fully participate in lessons. In the less effective lessons learners are not being given activities or tasks to complete which sufficiently challenge them or to enable them to build on the skills they already have. In a few cases, teaching techniques used to improve learners' literacy and numeracy are ineffective.

Has the curriculum developed sufficiently to provide a better range of destinations for leavers? Reasonable progress

At the time of the last inspection most learners progressed onto long term care placements, mostly within the organisation. A new curriculum was introduced in September 2009 which now provides more progression opportunities and increased focus on vocational skills and community engagement. More learners gain work experience than at the time of the last inspection and links with partner organisations have strengthened resulting in a few learners accessing mainstream further education courses. This has increased the focus on learners' long term goals and progression opportunities. Discussions about future possible destinations and long term objectives are now discussed early during the learners' first reviews.

Leadership and management

Has professional development improved staff performance and expertise related to teaching and learning? Insufficient progress

The staff have very recently undergone staff development to improve their skills in planning for learning matched to individual learner's needs. Further training for staff to enable them to effectively integrate literacy and numeracy skill development into lessons has been arranged for the spring term. College lesson observations are more

rigorous than at the time of the last inspection and useful feedback is given to teachers about what they should do to improve their performance. However, it is too early to see the impact of these developments on improved staff expertise and performance. During the monitoring visit inspectors observed too much variability in the quality of teaching and learning. The college intend to employ more qualified and experienced staff in January to help address the lack of staff expertise in teaching and learning.

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