

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college:           Condover College

Date of visit:             11-12 March 2009

### Context

Condover College Limited (the college) is an association registered under the Industrial and Provident act with charitable status. It is a small independent specialist residential college 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 Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

Learners undertake a pre-entry programme of education for two or three years. Most learners are resident for 52 weeks a year, of which 14 weeks are funded by Social Services. The majority of learners who complete their programmes remain within the organisation as permanent residents.

Education programmes are based at Grafton within a new purpose adapted facility opened in November 2007. Residential accommodation is provided in small community-based homes at Condover, Pontsbury and Bowmere which are a few miles away.

At the previous inspection in May 2008, the college was judged to be inadequate. A new Director of Education was appointed in February 2009.

### Achievement and standards

How well is learner progress tracked and monitored?	Insufficient progress
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Initial assessment information is very comprehensive in relation to learners' medical and personal needs, but is underdeveloped in relation to communication and basic skills. Detailed assessment of learners' communication needs to inform target setting is underway. Individual learning plans have been simplified to provide more focus on targets set for learners' achievements in communication and in basic and personal skills. All tutors record progress against these targets and subject tutors record achievement against subject specific targets. Achievements have yet to be summarised by personal tutors within an end of term report. It is too early to judge if this is improving the progress made by learners. Target setting in relation to work related skills is underdeveloped.

## Quality of provision

What progress has been made in improving planning for learning?	Insufficient progress
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Learners' individual learning objectives are more precise and included in session plans for learners to achieve. These give appropriate focus to the development of communication, numeracy and personal skills identified within individual learning plans. Tutors are required to evaluate how well the session planning has worked, if the timing was correct, whether there were sufficient resources or if there were outside influences which disrupted the session. However, there is little focus given to the evaluation of how well learners learn or make progress. Session plans do not identify sufficiently the different activities learners should undertake according to their individual learning objectives and levels of ability.

What progress has been made in improving the curriculum framework?	Reasonable progress
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There are now more opportunities for learners to develop communication, numeracy and literacy skills within a broader range of curriculum activities. The recently developed 'Design for Living' curriculum is providing a better match and range of activities in relation to learners' levels of ability. It also provides a progressive three year programme for learners to follow in the development of skills across all subject areas and in particular in relation to literacy, numeracy and communication skills. There are more opportunities for learners to develop work-related skills with the introduction of initiatives such as the 'Young Enterprise Scheme' and to gain qualifications in nationally accredited courses. Activities are more structured with an information exchange session at the beginning of the day. This enables learners to meet with their tutors and to gain a better understanding of what activities they will be participating in during the day. The college is at an early stage of implementing a total communication environment with the valuable input of an experienced Speech and Language Therapist. A communication environment audit was undertaken in November 2008 which provided a thorough and useful analysis of what actions needed to be taken to improve provision. The college has started to implement the recommendations and already resources such as objects of reference are being used more widely.

What progress has been made in improving the specialist teaching expertise of staff?	Insufficient progress
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The college has recently appointed two additional tutors with experience of teaching learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties. All full-time tutors now have a teaching qualification. There is increased input from the Speech and Language Therapist who now works two days per week and gives valuable feedback to staff about the approaches they should use to enable learners to achieve their communication skills learning targets. There are plans to deliver further support and training to staff. It is too early to evaluate the impact the increased staff qualifications, experience and coaching are making on learners' progress.

What progress has been made in improving the promotion of equality and diversity and in meeting the college's legislative duties?	Insufficient progress
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The college has made some progress in responding to its legislative duties although much is in the very early stages of development and is not yet firmly embedded to demonstrate any impact on learners or staff. The profile of equality and diversity and its promotion is gradually being raised at Conover and the college is currently seeking a board member to champion the theme of equality and diversity. Managers are beginning to analyse the performance of different groups of learners. However, these data are not yet fully evaluated or monitored formally by the board or senior managers. Also, there has been no formal analysis of staff by age, disability, gender or ethnicity.

A disability equality scheme and a race equality scheme are in place, although there is currently no specific scheme to promote gender equality. Action plans are in place for disability and race but tend to be broad-based and not all targets or objectives enable the college to measure progress effectively. For example, the disability plans lack sharp targets and the race equality plan lacks clear timescales and accountability for all actions. Equality and diversity plans are currently monitored through the college management team. A specific equality and diversity group is planned to take on this role in the coming months to take forward and lead on the promotion of equality and monitor actions plans more effectively.

A programme of equalities training has been devised for staff. To date, around half of all full-time and half of all part-time staff have received some form of training. All board members have not yet received formal equality and diversity training although this is currently planned on a rolling programme over the next six months. College managers have not yet received training in how to undertake equality impact assessments. Equality impact assessment screening of the college's policies and procedures has not yet been prioritised or completed to ensure any potential positive or negative discrimination is identified and appropriate action taken.

Some consideration has been given to how the college can promote equality and diversity through the curriculum and through lessons, although this is in the early stages of development.

What progress has been made in improving the quality improvement processes within the college, particularly arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching and learning?	Insufficient progress
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The college's post inspection action plan has been reviewed to focus more directly on its key areas for improvement. There are clear responsibilities and milestones outlined for the actions identified. The plan is reviewed more frequently and progress updated where appropriate. However, not all objectives or targets laid out in the plan are sharp enough to enable managers to measure their impact fully. Much of the evidence cited in the plan regarding progress is too anecdotal and actions are not

prioritised sufficiently. As a result, the college is in the process of producing a quality cycle and framework to provide a more structured approach to quality monitoring. The present lack of a quality framework to check compliance, consistency and implementation systematically is making it difficult for the college to measure progress effectively.

The college has reviewed and simplified its paperwork for recording the quality of teaching and learning. Ten observations have been undertaken this year, predominantly by external consultants, and findings suggest a more realistic profile. However, there is no clear framework that underpins the college's observation of teaching and learning. For example, several lessons observed during 2008/09 were judged not to meet learners' educational needs sufficiently, but not all teachers of these lessons have received clear action plans regarding their development needs. In addition, there is no systematic coaching or mentoring support in place for these teaching staff or process of re-observation to determine if support has led to improvement.

The college recognises the need to expand and train its own internal observation team and plans are in place to develop this with immediate effect. The college is in the early stages of developing partnership arrangements with another local specialist college to aid in the validation and formal monitoring of its future lesson observations.

How effectively is the board monitoring the college's educational provision?	Reasonable progress
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Board members demonstrate clear commitment to improving the college and addressing the issues raised at the previous inspection. Members of the board have recognised the need to increase their monitoring of college's educational provision. As a result, more time has been allocated to reviewing the education provision at board meetings. In addition, there has been an increase in more information being presented to the board, including reporting on developments within teaching and learning. Reports on the findings of external consultants in regards to the quality of provision have also been discussed. Board members also feel better informed regarding the college's progress against its quality improvement plan. However reporting is in the very early stages of development and board members recognise the need to ensure much greater rigour in their approach to monitoring the educational provision. For example, overall key performance indicators and a formal quality framework to enable the board to test out systematically the progress being made by the college are not in place. A board member has recently been appointed as a champion for quality improvement and plans are in place to set up a subcommittee which can provide a more detailed focus on education and report more comprehensively on progress.