

Nash College

Focused Monitoring Visit Report

Unique reference number: 131924

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Last day of inspection: 2 February 2011

Type of provider: Independent specialist college

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Nash College is an independent specialist college that currently provides further education to 62 learners aged 19 to 25, of whom just over half are residential. Of these, around a third are of minority racial and ethnic heritage. The learners are funded by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). The college, situated in Hayes on the outskirts of the London Borough of Bromley, provides for learners with severe or profound learning disabilities and complex needs. The college is registered as a care home with nursing, and is part of Livability, a large UK-based charity. The provision at Nash College centres on four programme areas: functional skills; personal and social development; vocational and community access; and, the residential programme. A new chief executive has recently been appointed and the college is planning to extend its remit by increasing the numbers of learners with autism.

At its last inspection, the college was found to be satisfactory overall, with equality and diversity good. However, the site, which is on a sharp incline, was not satisfactory. This inspection focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Outcomes for learners

How much progress has Nash College made in improving outcomes for learners and recording the progress of learners relative to their prior qualifications? Reasonable progress

At the last inspection, the outcomes for learners were satisfactory overall, but the systems for tracking and recording of learners' achievements relative to their previous attainment were not robust. Since the last inspection, the college has made reasonable progress. In 2009/10, 18 students passed foundation learning units and, following a dip in 2008/09, the percentage of course targets achieved over the year improved to 83% in 2009/2010. The college did not identify any significant differences in achievements between different groups of learners. The college's analysis included different types of capability. The college shows an improving trend in relation to economic well-being, with more students following some form of employment-related pathway. The majority of current learners now have employability targets. The therapy staff are able to show the progress of learners over time, and have developed a very useful spider graph to demonstrate progress graphically. The college has made a start to developing performance indicators to capture the progress of students across all aspects of the programme, but has yet to complete a full cycle using its newly-developed management information system.

Leadership and management

How much progress has Nash College made in improving its arrangements for self-assessment and quality improvement, in particular in teaching and learning? **Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection, the arrangements for quality assurance were satisfactory. Teaching and learning were satisfactory, but inspectors identified specific areas for development in the use of intensive interaction when working with students with profound needs, and in the planning of activities to match the individual needs of learners. Lapses were found in health and safety. The college has made reasonable progress in using self-assessment and the quality improvement plan to improve teaching and learning since then. Staff have had further training in relation to all of the aspects identified as requiring improvement. Managers record the schemes of work and lesson plans electronically, and have intervened where they have identified the need for improvements. The use of lesson observations, including the use of external observers, has increased. Managers have collated the results of lesson observations and used them for further planning. A system of mentoring by senior staff has been introduced and senior staff now spend time working alongside teachers. The scheme observers know what to look for and understand what constitutes best practice. The formal observations show improvement, but more needs to be done to ensure that all staff implement the training in intensive interaction and health and safety effectively, and that all teachers make best use of support staff to ensure learners are fully engaged and challenged.

How much progress has Nash College made in improving the arrangements for safeguarding? **Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection, safeguarding was satisfactory overall, but policies were not clearly written and not always fully understood by the staff. The college site was not satisfactory. Since then, safeguarding has had a much higher profile within the college, and staff and learners have a much greater understanding of the issues. Staff have had further training, including the Mental Capacity Act 2005. The policies and documentation have been revised and a senior manager has recently been accepted on the board of the local safeguarding authority. Issues of concern are raised at the college safeguarding forum. The reporting of incidents has increased as staff have a greater understanding of the issues and of the importance of reporting. The college maintains and updates the central register. Health and safety are included in lesson planning and is one of the criteria in the lesson observation scheme. The college has made significant refurbishments to its site as, despite vigorous efforts, the charity has not been able to find a site that is fit for purpose. The current site limits the freedom of learners in wheelchairs to move around the site safely and staff have to ensure that learners do not enter unsafe areas of the site. The college has taken suitable steps to minimise the impact by, for example, enabling learners to spend more time off the site as part of their teaching programme.

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