

Doncaster College for the Deaf

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

Doncaster College for the Deaf operates under the auspices of Doncaster Deaf Trust, a registered charity limited by guarantee. It is located on a 27-acre site on the outskirts of Doncaster. The college provides residential and day further education, primarily for deaf and hearing-impaired students and those with communication difficulties. An increasing number of students also have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Day students have significantly increased in number and now constitute 35% of the total student cohort. At present there are 107 residential and 60 day students, of whom 114 are funded by the Young People's Learning Agency and 53 through the Department for Work and Pensions and the Regional Training Unit. The majority of students are male and approximately 15% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college provides courses in a range of vocational areas and offers qualifications from pre-entry level through to level 4. Inspectors judged the college to be good overall in its previous full inspection in November 2007. At its most recent monitoring visit, in June 2009, they found that reasonable progress had been made in four of the six themes inspected. Significant progress had been made in the remaining two themes, namely the monitoring of teaching and learning, and self-assessment.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in the gathering and evaluation of information to support self-assessment and quality improvement?

Reasonable progress

At the 2009 monitoring visit, the college had very recently developed its management information system to make information more readily accessible and to bring together monitoring information held in different formats. This system is starting to provide senior managers with useful information to inform self-assessment and quality improvement planning. The 2009/10 self-assessment report contains more information in relation to students' achievements and incorporates the views of students well. The improved quality assurance of lessons, reported at the monitoring visit, provides a very effective evaluation of the overall quality of teaching and learning. The college has successfully identified actions to bring about improvements such as the recruitment of a functional skills co-ordinator. The self-assessment report and quality improvement plan effectively identify actions to improve the quality of provision and are closely monitored by senior managers. However, areas for improvement within the quality improvement plan do not sufficiently identify the intended impact on students' outcomes or include substantive targets for improvement.

Outcomes for students

To what extent do students still achieve and make good progress across all aspects of provision, including on accredited courses and in their personal and social development?

Significant progress

At the previous monitoring visit, students' achievements were judged to be good. Students still achieve extremely well on a number of accredited courses and gain high pass rates. Overall, pass rates have continued to improve and in 2009/10, at 98%, they were four percentage points higher than in 2008/09. Students make good progress in their personal and social skills. The process for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) is fully implemented and enables students to gain accredited units in their personal and social skills development where appropriate. Students progress well through different levels of accreditation, with the vast majority gaining better than expected qualifications. The college effectively compares achievement data in relation to gender and minority ethnic backgrounds. This analysis demonstrates that there is no significant difference in achievement rates in relation to gender or ethnic grouping. However, data are not yet sufficiently analysed for different groups of students in relation to their disability to identify or remedy, if appropriate, any differences in achievement.

Leadership and management

How well does the college ensure that all students feel safe and secure?

Significant progress

At the time of the inspection in 2007 the college had comprehensive safeguarding procedures in place. Senior managers report that the health and safety and well-being of students have been given a much higher priority. This is evidenced through the more highly developed links with external safeguarding agencies and much improved reporting systems to ensure that students' concerns are dealt with quickly. The central staff recruitment vetting reporting system, which ensures that appropriate checks are obtained, is closely monitored. Risk assessments are devised to ensure that staff are supervised while the process of obtaining the checks takes place. Highly individualised risk assessments are devised for all students and for all activities. The college actively seeks students' views and students report that they feel safe and know to whom they should talk if they have any concerns. All staff undergo training and achieve a good range of qualifications in child protection awareness, creating a culture of safety protection for vulnerable young adults as well as helping to prevent bullying behaviour.

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