

Portland (Whitegates) College

Focused monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 131959

Name of lead inspector: Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI

Last day of inspection: 29 September 2010

Type of provider: Independent specialist college

Address: Dukeries Centre
Park Street
Worksop
S80 1HH

Telephone number: 01909 509400

FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Whitegates College was sub-contracted provision under West Nottinghamshire College until 31 August 2010. It has very recently been contracted to Portland College who are now overseeing the provision. Transition arrangements between the two colleges are well advanced. Accommodation at the Portland campus has been allocated specifically for use by students at Whitegates.

Whitegates provides opportunities for educational, social and personal development for young people aged 16 to 25, all of whom have autistic spectrum disorders. Situated in the north Nottinghamshire town of Worksop, it is part of the Nottingham Regional Society for Adults and Children with Autism (NoRSACA), a charity and registered company limited by guarantee. At the time of this monitoring visit there were 26 learners funded by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), of whom two were female, 17 were aged over 19 and four were of minority ethnic heritage. The college was last inspected in December 2005 when its overall effectiveness, quality of provision and leadership and management were judged inadequate. Support and social and educational inclusion were judged satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in self-assessment and action planning to identify clearly the college's priorities for improvement?	Insufficient progress
---	------------------------------

The college's self-assessment report is now written consistently using the common inspection framework. The 2008/09 self-assessment report integrates a number of quotes from parents, external bodies and students, although these are not extensive or, in all cases, current. The college's own data suggest that an increased focus on teaching and learning has led to improvements in the quality of lessons, with all internal observations recorded as satisfactory or better. Although most of the overarching quality improvement systems and structures are sound, they have not all been implemented rigorously or consistently enough by Whitegates. As a result, convincing evidence to support judgements within the self-assessment is insufficient. The use of data and trend information to support judgements is also limited despite this issue being identified on previous internal quality reviews.

The quality improvement plan does not contain objectives which are sharply focused, timescales or success measures and the plan fails to identify who is responsible for implementing actions. Consequently, accountability for quality improvement is not sufficiently clear within the college. A 2009/10 self-assessment report and plan is due to be produced shortly in conjunction with Portland College.

The college's single central register for safeguarding is satisfactory. Arrangements for checking the quality of risk assessments are underdeveloped. A senior director for the NoRSACA charity has recently taken on responsibility for safeguarding and from September 2010, incidents and accidents are now reported formally.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in formally recognising, reporting and improving learners' achievement, particularly for different groups? **Insufficient progress**

Learners' individual achievements and successes are celebrated effectively through the weekly learner forum, a range of displays around the college and an annual awards ceremony. This aspect remains a strength of the college. An individual learning target booklet is now used to record learners' targets and progress in non-accredited learning for literacy, numeracy, and personal and social skills. Not all targets are specific enough or broken down into sufficiently small steps in learning. The recording of progress against these targets in the booklets is not always sufficiently specific in relation to progress made and skills developed, making the tracking and measurement of learners' progress difficult to assess.

The overall collection, analysis and evaluation of data, including destination data, are underdeveloped in relation to all learners' achievements and for the performance of different groups of learners. The college has no overall data of learners' progress towards individual non-accredited targets over time to enable them to analyse trends or to report clearly and accurately to governors. Data on achievement of unit accreditation or full qualifications are maintained, but are not always used effectively to identify trends.

Quality of provision

What progress has the college made in strengthening its curriculum? **Reasonable progress**

Learners have increased and effective opportunities to develop their literacy, numeracy and communication skills. A specialist Skills for Life tutor provides appropriate support. A weekly visit by a speech and language therapist is helping the college to develop its communication support strategy. The college has broadened its range of appropriate learning opportunities. This includes an increased range of relevant awards to accredit aspects of the curriculum, including group work and communication skills, accessing public transport and skills for shopping. Access to partner college courses and tasters has improved satisfactorily. Learners attend courses and tasters in drama, computer skills, car maintenance and hair and beauty.

Reasonable progress has been made in developing opportunities for learners to voice their opinions. Learners' feedback is sought at the end of lessons. A weekly learner

forum enables learners and tutors to discuss issues. Two learner representatives attend governors' meetings to provide feedback.

Quality of provision

What progress has the college made in monitoring and improving the quality of individual learning plans and targets?

Insufficient progress

Initial assessment is strengthened through input from a specialist Skills for Life tutor and a speech and language therapist. Initial assessment outcomes however, are still not always used effectively to devise precise and meaningful targets. The individual learning plan is maintained by the learner and includes appropriate information on likes, dislikes, communication strategies, as well as learner and staff comments on reviews and copies of certification. The individual learner target booklet records targets and progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills. The quality of target setting, however, remains too inconsistent. Targets seen during the visit were too broad or too complex and did not provide small steps to promote effective progress. Some targets were presented in symbols and text but there was too much information on the page and the language was too complex. Formal monitoring of the quality of targets and individual learning plans is not yet in place. Some training on target setting has taken place since the last inspection but the impact of this is unclear.

Leadership and management

How much progress has the college made in actively promoting and monitoring equality and diversity?

Insufficient progress

Staff at Whitegates are committed to their students and work closely with individuals to help them work harmoniously together. Some learners of minority ethnic heritage are encouraged to share information about their culture with their peers. The monitoring of equality and diversity is insufficient and does not enable the college to measure the impact of all its actions effectively. A clear implementation plan does not exist for the promotion of race or disability and although one exists for the promotion of gender, many of the targets are too broad to be meaningful. The analysis of achievement by different groups of students is underdeveloped. As a result, the college is not in a position to plan effectively for improvement or indeed, celebrate what it is doing well. Equality impact assessments on bespoke procedures and policies at Whitegates have not yet been undertaken. Since the last inspection staff training on different aspects of equality and diversity has taken place although training records are not clearly evaluated.

The lighting system in the college does not consistently provide an appropriate environment for all learners. In some areas of the college, the fluorescent tubes do not have a cover on them and records indicate that some learners are sensitive to light.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010