

Sense College

Reinspection monitoring visit report

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Last day of inspection: 4 November 2010

Type of provider: Independent specialist college

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REINSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Sense College is an independent specialist college (ISC), operating in the areas of Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Northampton. It is part of the national organisation Sense, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. All learners are deafblind, hearing-impaired or visually impaired. Most learners have profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities affecting emotional development and behaviour. Some learners have complex health needs. The majority of the learners are in long-term care places funded by health and social services. Learners are taught in eight regional day centres, known as resource centres. At the time of the monitoring visit, 30 learners were in receipt of funding from the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and 148 learners were funded from other funding streams.

At the last inspection, in March 2010, overall effectiveness was inadequate, as was capacity to improve. Leadership and management as well as equality and diversity were inadequate. Safeguarding, outcomes for learners and quality of provision were satisfactory.

Themes

Outcomes for learners

How much progress has Sense College made in improving outcomes for learners?	Insufficient progress
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At the last inspection areas for improvement included: the tracking and recording of learners' achievements; the setting of targets; the analysis of destinations and routes for progression and the monitoring, auditing and recording of learners' achievements. Since then the staff have concentrated on improving the effectiveness and consistency of targets, and have made reasonable progress in ensuring greater consistency in relation to the use of short-term goals. Early signs are that, although more refinements are still required, the process has improved. However, the college has made insufficient progress in taking account of the achievement of learners' longer terms goals and the tracking and recording their achievements during their time at the college. The college is not able to evaluate the overall progress made by leavers in relation to their starting points, and cannot demonstrate improvements in outcomes. The college is in the process of developing a new curriculum framework, linked to an electronic tracking system. The college has collected destinations data, which show that 83% of learners continue to attend the same centre in Sense's day services provision. These destinations do not demonstrate progression.

Leadership and management

How much progress has Sense College made in improving its arrangements for self-assessment and quality improvement? **Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection Sense College's quality improvement arrangements were insufficiently cohesive or coherent, and the self-assessment report did not provide an accurate picture of the college's performance. Since then the college has made reasonable progress, although it is still in the early stages of implementation of the quality cycle. The post-inspection action plan is detailed and has been regularly monitored and updated. The process for observing teaching and learning has improved, although the criteria are very general, and do not reflect the specialist nature of the college's work. The revised management structure now has appropriate accountabilities, which members of staff in the centres understand. A new supervisory board has met twice. The board has received progress reports from the college, and is in the process of developing performance indicators. The revised quality cycle includes monthly management meetings with a focus on performance. The appointment of an interim Principal has strengthened the management team. The self-assessment processes now involve all centres more effectively. The most recent self-assessment update is broadly accurate in identifying the effectiveness of actions taken, but it does not identify all of the continuing areas for improvement. The college acknowledges that its strategic business planning will need to take account of the changing external environment, and that the learners funded by the YPLA should have a clearly defined and distinct educational programme.

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

At the last inspection, inspectors identified the lack of child protection training and procedures as an area for improvement. The college has now rectified this, and all members of staff have now received both adult and child protection training. The college has increased its behaviour management training, and has a thorough risk assessment process, with a focus on anticipating and reducing risks of behavioural incidents. The college does not yet report safeguarding incidents to the supervisory body, and not all teaching and support staff have received training in relation to the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

How much progress has Sense College made in meeting its duties with regard to equality and diversity? **Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection, the college did not meet its duties. Since then it has made reasonable progress. It has an action plan that identifies what needs to be done, and has developed an equality policy. The college has carried out equalities impact assessments on its key policies, and has identified areas for improvements, such as accessibility for all documents and communications. The college has collated its

learner data by different groups, and recognises that it has recruited very few learners from minority ethnic backgrounds. It has also identified different levels of success by different groups in different centres, and used that as an opportunity for staff training. The college has analysed the composition of the workforce and taken action to try to recruit more staff from under-represented groups. Equality and diversity issues are now included as a standing item at team meetings, and equalities topics are more widely promoted generally within the centres. Staff have attended an equalities training event, but the college recognises that more needs to be done to increase understanding about the promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum, and that lesson plans and teaching observations need further development. The college acknowledges that it should include learners and their views on its supervisory body.

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