

Condover College

Focused monitoring visit report

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Conover College Limited is registered as an industrial and provident society. 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 difficulties and challenging behaviour. There are currently 20 learners. Education programmes are delivered within a purpose-adapted facility that opened in 2007. The college aims to provide a transition between school and adult life that is designed to maximise potential and independence.

The college was inspected in May 2008 and was judged to be inadequate. It was reinspected in May 2009 and judged to be satisfactory. Areas for improvement were: the recording and tracking of learners' long-term progress; planning of learning to better match individual needs; the need for professional development to be more focused on teaching and learning; and curriculum opportunities and transition planning. A monitoring visit in December 2009 found that the college was making reasonable progress in curriculum and transition planning but insufficient progress in all the other areas. There have been three changes to the Head of Education since the 2008 inspection. The current Head of Education took up post in February 2011. The report focuses on the themes outlined below.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made to strengthen the self-assessment processes since the last visit?

Insufficient progress

The rigour of self-assessment has not improved sufficiently since the last monitoring visit. The self-assessment report for 2009/10 lacked sufficient specific targets to drive improvement in the current year. The evidence to support judgements was not clear enough, and some aspects of provision appeared as both strengths and areas for improvement. More recently, the college has drawn up a post-inspection action plan, which has a much sharper focus on issues to address and clear identification of who is responsible for actions to be taken and deadlines for completion. This approach is already beginning to improve the quality of provision for students but it is too early to see its impact on all areas for improvement.

Outcomes for learners

To what extent has the college improved the setting of long term goals for students, against which their progress can be tracked? **Reasonable progress**

Changes to students' individual learning plans since the last monitoring visit make much clearer the specific long-term goals for students, against which progress can be monitored. These are backed up by medium-term goals, which are used to inform specific learning objectives. Staff training has taken place to underpin this development and staff are much clearer about the purpose and structure of individual learning plans. As a result, students' progress is starting to be captured more effectively. Not all staff are fully confident in how to measure progress for students with the most complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Head of Education is working with individual staff on practical examples of how this can be achieved.

Quality of Provision

What progress has been made to improve the consistency of planning learning to address individual students' needs? **Insufficient progress**

Lesson plans contain learning objectives for individual students, but there is still too much variability in the extent to which these are used effectively in the delivery of lessons. In weaker lessons, there is still too much emphasis on learners carrying out the same task. In some cases students work on different tasks but their individual needs are not taken into account sufficiently to help them achieve their full potential. In one lesson observed during the visit, students were all asked to carry out the same counting and sequencing task. In another, the seating positions of two students hampered their attempts at an exercise in sharing the use of an electronic whiteboard. Where the level of challenge is not appropriate for the individual learner, this sometimes leads to loss of interest, or over-prompting by staff for students to produce the 'right' answer. Joint lesson observations with the Head of Education showed that the college is aware of this and is starting to remedy it through increased sharing of good practice from the better lessons.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made to increase the qualifications and training of teaching staff? **Reasonable progress**

Since the last monitoring visit, the college has taken effective steps to ensure all staff leading the delivery of sessions have teaching qualifications. It has also increased the number of teaching staff and improved induction and mentoring for new staff. In addition, a speech and language therapist is now employed four days a week. This has enabled more therapy sessions for individual students, and has increased staff

awareness of the communication needs of learners. Staff attend training sessions led by the speech and language therapist, and also sit in on sessions for individual students. Students are benefiting from increased staffing levels, and from greater use of effective communication strategies. The college recognises the need to develop this work further, and to increase the specialist qualifications of staff. Learning support assistants have all received appropriate training. Other staff assisting in classes have not all had sufficient training on educational strategies.

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