

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: RNIB New College
Date of visit: 29 January 2007

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

Achievement and standards

The college self-assessment report (SAR) says that achievement is good but it includes 'collection of data' in its main areas for improvement. Is the evidence for students' achievement sufficiently robust?

- Achievement is satisfactory overall. Some students are making good progress. Examination results vary across subjects with GCE English results being below target grades. A few students under-performed across all subjects in 2006/07. Following analysis of student achievement, the college has introduced a November assessment week to try and identify potential underperformance early on in the student programme in order to provide additional support, where appropriate. The college is also carrying out work to ensure students are placed on programmes appropriate to their needs
- The college has data systems for tracking academic qualifications but recognises the need for further analysis of the achievement of particular groups of students.

What progress has been made in addressing the weakness at the last inspection in the recording of achievement in the extended curriculum?

- The college has made some progress. Wider skills acquired in the extended curriculum are recorded in the Progress File. This is discussed during review afternoons held each term, when students meet with their tutors.

Quality of education and training

Is target setting and monitoring of individual learning satisfactory?

- The college has made some progress in setting targets and monitoring learning. Provision mapping, initially established at the pre-entry assessment phase, is continuing to be developed. This is used to identify students' additional support needs, such as physiotherapy, Braille, literacy and numeracy support, and to set targets. Regular reviews of progress are undertaken, but the structure in place to collate information on student progress requires further development. There is no system yet in place that sets and reviews targets for the individual student's overall programme. There is some evidence of co-ordinated monitoring between the residential and education aspects of a student programme but this does not happen on a regular basis.

How effective is transition planning for students not going to university?

- Support for students going on to university is good but the college recognises that support for students progressing to further education is less well developed. This is identified as an area for action in the college improvement plan.

How well are students with additional needs supported? How effective is the delivery of literacy and numeracy support?

- Satisfactory systems are in place to assess and provide for students' additional support needs. This includes literacy and numeracy support where that is appropriate. There is a planned focus in 2007/08 on developing literacy across the college.

Leadership and management

How robust are systems to monitor teaching and learning? Has the college made sufficient progress in addressing a weakness in sharing good practice identified at the last inspection?

What aspects of the quality assurance system are still in development?

- Monitoring of teaching and learning has improved. Training has taken place for senior and middle managers who carry out observations. All teachers have two observations annually, carried out by different

observers. Work is taking place to share good practice, for example, the recording of lessons for training purposes. The college is planning to introduce peer observations. Senior managers are aware that the rigour of judgements of lesson observations varies. They understand that middle managers need to gain more experience and there is not yet a shared understanding amongst staff about what constitutes good teaching and learning. Staff do not yet carry out sufficient analysis of why students succeed or not.

- Quality standards are being developed; they are at the early draft stage. There is a good attempt to make standards measurable but this can lead to missed opportunities, for example to define what makes a good lesson. Student feedback on the quality of provision is limited.
- The college has introduced a policy co-ordination role, which is providing a useful mechanism to ensure policies are up-to-date and regularly reviewed.
- Some of the targets in the college three year development plan are too vague. The one year improvement plan does have more specific success criteria but some of these do not focus sufficiently on outcomes for students.

What training are governors planning to undertake their increased role following the de-merger from RNIB in April 2007?

- The college is carrying out appropriate actions in preparation for the planned de-merger from the RNIB in April 2007. This includes a review of governor training and membership and a re-structure of management responsibilities. The college has identified that all governors will require enhanced training to meet the demands of their new role post April 2007. A full day's training is scheduled in April and there are plans for further training during governor meetings.

The SAR indicates the need for further work in developing policy and practice relating to equality and diversity – what progress has been made?

- Satisfactory progress has been made relating to the promotion of equality. The college is compliant with legislation and is beginning to collate and analyse information relating to aspects of disability and race. Students are involved in the equality and diversity committee that has now been established. An intervention handbook has been recently produced, which links to actions in the implementation plan of the college's response to

equalities legislation. It is intended to be used to record details of actions taken, together with responses and results. The college acknowledges that it still needs to do more work with staff on promoting diversity and is planning appropriate training in the near future.