

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Royal School for the Deaf and Communication Disorders (Manchester)
Date of visit: 22 January 2008

Context

Royal School for the Deaf and Communication Disorders (RSDCD) is an independent specialist residential and day college on a shared site with the school. It is located near to Manchester and learners are referred from across the United Kingdom. The college meets the needs of learners who have severe and complex learning difficulties combined with significant communication disorders that include very limited or no oral language. Its aim is to develop communication systems to enable learners to make choices and decisions for themselves about their future lives. The college has 34 learners following a three-year vocational pathways course. All are funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In addition, two learners are funded by social services and a further three by local authorities. Six learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

All residential learners live in houses on the site and follow an individualised programme that includes literacy, numeracy and communication skills, life and vocational skills and creative studies. The teaching and residential accommodation is on one site and the college makes use of the residential units for teaching. Improvements to the college's accommodation were completed in September 2007. Plans are in place for an extension to the college's teaching accommodation and improvements to the residential accommodation.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in implementing the RARPA framework, including the recording of learning against individual targets?	Reasonable progress
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The implementation of the recognising and recording progress and achievement framework (RARPA) continues to develop well. The college self-

assessment report highlights that further work is needed to improve the quality of target setting and the recording of progress. Training has taken place for teachers and learning support assistants (LSA) in support of this development. The baseline assessment meeting, which involves education managers, teachers, therapists and residential staff, now more rigorously establishes each learner's priority goals for their long-term targets on their individual learning plan (ILP). Medium-term targets are now reduced in number, clear and specific. The process for setting targets is monitored more closely by managers but some variation still exists. Planning sheets linking learners' priority goals to their short term targets have been put in place. Teachers' planning files are reviewed each term to monitor that planning is linked to these individual priorities. Useful written feedback is provided that highlights areas for improvement. Analysis of overall achievement of individual goals is reviewed by managers. In 2006/07, 56% of medium-term goals were achieved. More recent analysis indicates an improvement to 60%; a target of 70% success rate has been set. Learning support assistants have a professional development target for improved recording of progress. The college is aware that the recording of progress against targets in tutorials remains inconsistent. In some instances the section for review just re-states the target; in other instances, it is too descriptive.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in ensuring the quality of teaching and learning meets the needs of all learners?	Reasonable progress
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The observation of teaching and learning was judged thorough at the previous inspection. In September 2007, it was further developed to include both announced and unannounced observations. The announced observations are linked to performance management, while unannounced observations, which take place within a two week period, focus on the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning for individual learners. Unannounced observations include themes such as the use of information and communication technologies. Reports on each of these observation schemes go to governors.

A specific focus has been on monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning for learners on the autism spectrum; this is identified as satisfactory in the self-assessment report. An external consultant has worked

with staff and managers for a year. This involved focused observations with detailed individual written feedback and clear areas for improvement. A focus of this monitoring and support has been on establishing specific communication strategies for individual learners. The overall observation process is still developing.

What progress has been made in improving accommodation to meet the range of learners needs?	Significant progress
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The refurbished college accommodation is of a high standard and includes specialist technical equipment. The accommodation now better meets the individual needs of the range of learners. Tracking systems are in most rooms. Sensory provision includes quiet and high stimulation rooms. All rooms can be used flexibly and include adjustable height tables and some moveable screens. The new life skills room is a highly useful resource with three distinct kitchen bays for use by different groups of learners. Learners use it as a common room during break times. The toilets have highly technical equipment that promotes learner self care and independence. The ICT suite is an excellent specialist resource, which can be subdivided into three discrete areas to meet individual needs. It includes a communication room with video phones and computer video links.

Since September 2007, college learners are separate from the school provision. Although there is an overall governing body, separate curriculum and resource committees have been established for both the school and the college. These met for the first time in October 2007. Plans are in place for the post-19 provision to be renamed as 'The Royal College'.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in improving the coherence of management information systems?	Reasonable progress
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The college has clearly identified what it requires from a management information system. A detailed action plan is in place and the system will be implemented from September 2008. The system is being tailored to the college, school and residential needs. College managers are working closely with external consultants to ensure that specific areas of the system are individualised to their needs. Teaching staff have had training sessions on specific aspects of the new system, such as use of the virtual learning

environment. It is intended that parents will be able to access this environment to find out about their son/daughter's progress.

What progress has been made to improve quality assurance systems, and what is the impact of this?	Reasonable progress
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The quality assurance systems are developing appropriately. Staff are now more closely involved in college self-assessment through a structured approach for developing curriculum self-assessment reports. A detailed quality improvement action plan is in place which clearly outlines the steps required to develop a coherent quality system. There is evidence of progress on this action plan. More recently, a draft annual quality improvement schedule has been developed which will be presented to governors in the spring term. The schedule brings together all aspects of quality improvement in one document. Each term all residential accommodation is visited to monitor and evaluate the quality of learning in the extended curriculum. Reports are produced that evaluate the quality in relation to independent living, social and creative activities, collaborative working with the education staff and communication support strategies. Areas for improvement are identified and monitored at subsequent visits. An evaluative summary report is produced each term for governors. A recently developed quality assurance process focuses on ensuring learner access to the extended curriculum activities.