

# Royal College Manchester

## Focused monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 106166

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**Type of provider:** Independent specialist college

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## Focused Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

### Context and focus of visit

Royal College Manchester offers day and residential provision to learners who have significant communication difficulties, often combined with complex medical needs or physical disabilities, as well as learning difficulties. The college is part of the Seashell Trust and shares an extensive site with the Royal School. All 44 learners are aged 19–25 and half of them are residential. They come from 22 local authorities. The aim of the college is to help learners progress to supported employment, further study, supported living and full participation in the community, according to their individual needs.

The college was inspected in 2007 and was judged to be good. A monitoring visit in 2010 found significant progress in strengthening safeguarding procedures and reasonable progress in the other aspects inspected. This monitoring visit focuses on the themes outlined below.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

**What progress has the college made in improving self-assessment, particularly at team level?**

**Reasonable progress**

All staff are engaged in self-assessment through a range of activities, including team meetings and completing questionnaires. Staff also have individual performance management meetings where targets are set. Links with other providers help staff to benchmark the college's strengths and areas for development. Staff are keen to bring about further improvement. They can cite examples of current priorities, such as increasing the involvement of learners in developing the provision. However, staff teams require further help to assist them in evaluating their work, rather than just describing it. The staffing restructure, currently underway, is aimed partly at strengthening this aspect of team management. Developments are also taking place to enhance the monitoring of the college at board level. A separate governing body for the college is due to be in place from December 2011. Plans are well advanced to ensure that the board has appropriate expertise to provide sufficient challenge when monitoring the rigour of the college's self-assessment, as well as assessing the work of the board itself.

#### Outcomes for learners

**To what extent is the college maintaining strengths in outcomes for learners?**

**Reasonable progress**

The college continues to be effective in the development of learners' communication skills. Learners satisfactorily increase their ability to communicate with others through the use of specialist equipment and input from therapists. As a result, they

are able to make more choices and participate in a wider range of activities within the college and the community. The development of work-related skills is more limited. Good examples exist of learners gaining increased confidence and independence through supported work placements. The college identifies the need to extend this programme where it is appropriate for learners. Within the current year, plans are well advanced to introduce a number of new placements. In addition, a new role of jobcoach is being introduced to expand links with employers. Learners already benefit from the work the college carries out with employers to divide up the tasks in a job. This enables a team of learners to carry out specific tasks that are suited to them individually to develop their skills and abilities.

## **Quality of provision**

**What progress has the college made in developing further the setting and monitoring of targets for individual learners?**

**Reasonable progress**

The college continues to improve its target setting and monitoring processes. A major step forward is the integration of targets across the educational and care settings. This ensures all staff are aware of learners' core targets and staff are using these increasingly effectively in devising activities to help learners make progress. Systems to record targets and progress are much improved and they enable managers to see much more easily what progress learners are making across all their sessions. However, some of the targets set last year were still too general. Further work has taken place to eliminate this problem. The targets set for new learners joining the college this year make good use of the outcomes of initial assessment to set sharper and more appropriate targets. The college is also considering introducing a simple, visual method of recording to enable staff to see at a glance the progress made by learners in fulfilling their targets. This is also aimed at involving learners more fully in the process.

## **Leadership and management**

**What progress is being made to improve further the monitoring of teaching and learning?**

**Reasonable progress**

The system to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. All teaching and support staff are observed working with learners, and the college works effectively with other providers to moderate its judgements. The college has a very realistic understanding of the quality of its lessons and last year judged over half to be good or better. Learners benefit from a sharper focus on learning during the observations. The college takes action to improve teaching and support where weaknesses are identified. However, it recognises that the pace of improvement has been too slow. Changes have been implemented to strengthen further its observation process. These include more opportunities for staff to observe each other's work and to spread good practice in what constitutes effective learning for learners with complex needs. In addition, plans are in place to develop further the levels of specialist expertise within the staff to respond to the increasing complexity of learners' needs.

**To what extent does the college ensure safeguarding training is kept up-to-date?**

**Significant progress**

The college continues to make significant progress in maintaining and developing further its safeguarding systems. This includes regular and effective training for staff. Within the college, aspects of the training are delivered by national organisations with specialist expertise in safeguarding. In addition, staff attend sessions run by the local authority. Following training, new staff are required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding procedures during their probationary period. Annual update training for all staff is delivered using interesting methods that fully engage staff and develop their skills and confidence in implementing safeguarding procedures. The effectiveness of the training is monitored very thoroughly. A safeguarding board, which includes members from external agencies, rigorously audits staff awareness and record keeping in the college. Since the last inspection, the college has made significant progress to develop learners' understanding of safety. Staff are very aware of the vulnerability of learners with severe communication and other disabilities. They use practical activities very successfully to increase learners' understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

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