

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: St Elizabeth's College
Date of visit: 26 June 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

Is progress made by learners preparing them successfully for the next step in their lives?

- Learners make good progress in developing the independence skills they need to succeed in their future lives. They learn these skills appropriately within their own homes and successfully perform every day life tasks such as shopping, cooking, and managing their money. Learners make good progress in the development of personal, social and communication skills, which underpins everything they do, and helps them to achieve in a wide range of curriculum activities. They develop appropriate work related skills through their involvement in social enterprise activities and external work placements. Progress made by learners taking part in such activities is not as well recorded as in other areas of provision.

Have attendance rates improved since the last inspection? Are retention rates still high?

- Retention rates for learners remain high and in line with other specialist colleges. Attendance is more accurately recorded and rates are now good.

Quality of education and training

Are learning goals and targets set for learners sufficiently challenging? Are the skills being developed by learners throughout their programmes, being captured effectively?

- Essential skills targets are set appropriately and are clearly identified by curriculum tutors for development within all curriculum activities. The

progress made by learners in relation to these skills is closely tracked and captured well within most curriculum activities. However, there are inconsistencies within lesson plans in the identification of learning outcomes for learners to achieve. Some of the learning outcomes do not relate sufficiently to the lesson aims. In some cases learning outcomes relate to generic social, personal and communication skills, whilst others relate to subject specific skills being developed.

- There are plans, where appropriate, to introduce more courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications for learners in vocational skills and in practical life and social skills. This will enable tutors to identify progression within vocational and work related skills more easily and provide more specific challenging targets for learners to achieve.

Are literacy, numeracy and communication skills fully embedded into all curriculum activities?

- Literacy, numeracy and communication skills are fully embedded into most curriculum activities and as a result learners are learning these skills in meaningful and relevant ways. Lesson plans effectively identify the range of literacy, numeracy and communication skills appropriate to the subject being taught or activity taking place. Curriculum tutors appropriately use skills for life learning objectives identified within individual development plans (IDPs) for learners to develop within lessons.

Are the information communication technology (ICT) resources, recently increased, used effectively within lessons?

- There has been substantial investment in ICT resources and lesson plans identify where these can be used effectively within learning activities. It is too early to assess the impact of these increased resources.

Is the inclusion of enterprise activities within learners' programmes matched to their individual needs and long term goals?

- There are plans to integrate social enterprise activities within individual learning programmes more effectively, by offering more training sessions from September 2007, for discrete groups of college learners. As these are still in the planning stage, it is too early to assess if social enterprise

activities will be matched effectively to learners' individual needs and long term goals.

Leadership and management

The college has at least double the number of learners it had at the last inspection? Do organisational structures support this growth sufficiently? Are there adequate resources of a quantity and quality to cope with the additional learners with varied additional needs?

- Organisational structures have developed recently to ensure the needs of learners are appropriately met. The senior management team has been strengthened to include a vice principal role and four lead curriculum tutors. These roles and skills are developing and training and support is being provided. There has also been a recent appointment of transitions co-ordinator and an increase in dedicated specialist support staff. Staff members feel well supported by managers and leaders and are appreciative of the opportunities given to them to develop their skills and expertise. Good communication systems exist between all staff teams. All staff contribute fully to the development of IDPs and in identifying support required by individual learners. Most are not yet fully involved in the self assessment of provision or in the identification of areas for improvement.

Are quality assurance processes comprehensive and effectively implemented?

- The comprehensive college quality improvement (QI) cycle has been further developed and identifies all key teaching and learning processes and policies and procedures for monthly monitoring purposes. Lesson observation plans focus appropriately on the learning taking place, by identifying progress, the level of challenge provided for individual learners, and the activities matched to their individual needs. The feedback provided to tutors focuses on these important aspects to ensure improvements to lessons are made. However, in some cases only one aspect of their performance is identified for improvement which is sometimes insufficient to bring about all the necessary changes within an acceptable timeframe.

To what extent has the developing links with other local education, work and training providers had on the development of provision or increased opportunities for learners?

- There are well developed links with local secondary schools through a consortium arrangement, where learners use school learning bases and facilities to develop skills such as ICT and sports. This arrangement enables the college to extend its curriculum further and for learners to mix with other members of the local community. All learners have an opportunity to develop work related skills through opportunities provided by the college on site, through a social enterprises scheme or through external work experience placements. Currently six learners attend external work experience placements organised through the college's recently appointed transitions coordinator.
- Progression to independent supported living is planned carefully in conjunction with the local authority to ensure a smooth transition from college. Key workers are involved in learners' annual reviews to aid transition planning.
- The college works closely with a local broker of services to enable people who are socially disadvantaged to reach their potential. This partnership has been successful in providing effective guidance and support to parents and to some learners on progression and transition opportunities.

Is the college keeping up to date with its obligations in relation to equalities and safeguarding legislation?

- The college has yet to fully comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended by the Special Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA). The college has extensive plans to improve the accommodation and resources for college learners. The planned date for the completion of the construction of buildings and major improvements to the site is September 2009. In the meantime some of the college's teaching accommodation is of a poor quality, with, in some cases, unsuitable access for learners with physical disabilities. A comprehensive audit of the site, including the school and residential areas has been undertaken. The action plan resulting from this audit is not sufficiently focused on the college provision and does not give enough detail as to what improvements need to be made and by when. Some priority areas, such

as replacing paving slab paths with tarmac, have long timescales for their completion.

- The college has recently developed an equality and diversity policy and procedure and a disability equality scheme. However, it is too early to comment on the progress and impact of proposed actions. The college has appropriate arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults.

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:

Are equal opportunities and diversity promoted sufficiently?

- There was insufficient time during the visit to judge if equal opportunities and diversity are being sufficiently promoted across college provision.