

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Henshaws College

Date of visit: 31 January 2008

Context

Henshaws College is a national specialist, residential further education college for learners who are blind or partially sighted with additional difficulties. It is located on a 12 acre rural site on the outskirts of Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The college forms part of Henshaws Society for Blind People (HSBP), a registered charity, which is based in the north of England. The college principal is a director of the parent organisation and reports to the chief executive of the society. The society is managed by a board of 11 trustees. During 2007, a board structure with three regions was established and the college is now responsible to Henshaw's Yorkshire. The principal is now also the chief executive of Henshaw's Yorkshire.

All learners have learning difficulties and disabilities in addition to their primary disability of being visually impaired. These include moderate and severe learning difficulties, physical disabilities, communication disorders and behaviours that challenge. Learners are recruited nationally; the large majority from the north of the United Kingdom. Residential accommodation is available in learners' houses on the main site. In February 2008, the college will be opening new purpose built residential accommodation for 22 learners with enhanced facilities for learners with more complex physical support needs. Further improvements to the accommodation are planned. At the time of the visit there were 65 LSC funded residential learners and 8 day learners. All learners are aged between 16 and 25. Five learners were from black or minority ethnic backgrounds and 24 were female.

Achievement and standards

What is the progress on implementing the framework for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning (RARPA)?	Reasonable progress
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The implementation of the RARPA framework continues to develop well. Since the previous monitoring visit, there is an increased focus on monitoring and improving the quality of target setting. There is clear evidence of targets

being monitored by operational managers and modified through this process. Learners continue to be set lesson targets and termly targets, as well as Star goals (soft skills). In addition, each learner now has a college goal linked to and supporting achievement towards each long term goal.

The college is in the process of establishing a new management information system (MIS) which is central to the development of RARPA. There is a detailed MIS implementation plan. All targets for first year learners are on the MIS and it is planned that targets for all learners will be on the system by September 2008. Since autumn term 2007, all learners have social and communication targets which are on the management information system.

Further development has taken place in relation to the well-established Henshaws ten levels of achievement (HAL). The ten levels have now been broken down into three curriculum delivery levels: discovery, explorer and challenger. Work is underway in each curriculum area to break down the skills at these three levels into small steps to more accurately identify learner achievement and progress, which will be recorded on the MIS. This process is very well developed in the independent living curriculum.

Quality of provision

What is the progress on developing and increasing the vocational pathways?	Significant Progress
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At the previous monitoring visit, the college was in the process of reviewing and establishing four vocational pathways. This has been reviewed and further developed and five vocational pathways are now being established: hospitality, retail and administration, media, horticulture and arts and crafts. The links with Henshaw's art and crafts centre has been further strengthened to include hospitality, retail and administration, horticulture and art and crafts. There are currently six learners on placement at the centre. It is planned that the centre will also develop a social enterprise firm. The centre will be opening a garden nursery at Easter 2008. The college has worked closely on this project and a specialist horticulture tutor and learning support assistant have been employed. Two commercial polytunnels have been established in the college grounds to produce plants for sale in the nursery. One polytunnel is fully wheelchair accessible with raised growing beds.

Effective links have been established with a wide range of external organisations to enhance the vocational pathways and provide a range of

work experience opportunities for the learners. These include the local hospital radio and cafe, a land based college, Barnardo's (Dr. B's), charity shops, and the regional police force. All learners have a work experience placement on the college site. A mapping exercise has been carried out to ensure that opportunities are available at an appropriate level for individual learners. The college has opened an art gallery onsite and officially launched it with an art exhibition. The hospitality learners provided the refreshments. The learners ran a market stall in the local Christmas market to gain a different type of retail experience. Plans are in place to develop vocational opportunities further and the feasibility of having a college radio station is currently being explored.

What is the progress on implementing Skills for Life?	Significant Progress
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A detailed and coherent Skills for Life strategy is in place and is being implemented well by a senior manager and a Skills for Life co-ordinator. A detailed impact report was produced to evaluate the first year and this indicates a significant increase in learners' achievement of communication goals in autumn 2007. A project on embedding Skills for Life in the living skills department was completed in autumn 2007 which led to the development of a useful practical guide for all staff. A revised baseline assessment is now being used which allows the assessor to record ability more clearly. Several staff training events have taken place to raise staff awareness and support the integration of Skills for Life within subject areas. Very clear links have been established between the Skills for Life team and the curriculum areas. The specialist staff worked alongside subject tutors for two terms to promote understanding and increase skills. The observation of teaching and learning scheme now includes comment on how well Skills for Life are integrated. Good links have been established externally to support the implementation of the strategy.

How well has the college improved its transition planning?	Significant Progress
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Transition planning is now highly structured. A detailed transition policy and procedure has been established. All learners now have a weekly transition session. A transition curriculum is in place which is clearly differentiated to meet the individual needs of learners. A good range of external speakers, visits and events are planned to support the curriculum. Links with Connexions remain good with well-planned weekly visits. Transition planning

is now integrated within the annual review and tutorial processes, and clearly linked to learners' long term goals. The transition team is led by a senior manager and has good links with Henshaws wider transition team which benefits the learners. Thorough tracking of projected leaver destinations in 2007 indicates some highly positive progression routes including several vocational training courses linked to college work experience.

Leadership and management

What is the progress on improving the process for risk assessments?	Reasonable Progress
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A well-established structure is in place for the management of health and safety across the college. Health and safety processes continue to develop well across all aspects of the curriculum. Since the previous monitoring visit, Henshaw's Yorkshire has employed a health and safety manager with specialist qualifications in occupational health. An additional audit by an external organisation has supported the robust nature of the processes. Risk assessments reviewed during the visit were appropriately detailed and included measures to minimise risk. The health and safety annual review is evaluative and clearly identifies strengths and areas for improvement. It is supported by a detailed learner health and safety action plan. The concept of safe learner is well-established.

What progress has been made on maintaining a single central record for safeguarding?	Reasonable Progress
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At the previous monitoring visit, the college had made a good start on maintaining a centralised record. The college now meets the DfES guidelines on maintaining a single central vetting and recruitment record.