

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Sense East (Hampton Resource Centre)

Date of visit: 31 January 2008

Context

Sense East has grown since the last inspection. From a total of 155 learners, there are now 28 learners funded by the learning and skills council (LSC). Of these 13 are male and 15 are female and four learners are of minority ethnic heritage. All learners currently funded through the LSC are non-resident and taught in all seven day services centres known as resource centres; in Peterborough (Hampton), Dereham, Glenside, Kettering and Bourne, Knapwell and Louth.

All learners are identified as being deafblind, hearing impaired or visually impaired. Most learners have severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities affecting emotional development and behaviour. Some learners have complex health needs. A new principal was permanently appointed in November 2007. Since the last annual assessment visit the college's head office has relocated to Hampton, Peterborough, adjacent to the new resource centre. This monitoring visit was based at the new head office and resource centre in Hampton.

Achievement and standards

Where relevant, are learners continuing to achieve well through a range of national awards available?	Reasonable progress
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Learners are continuing to achieve well through a range of national accredited awards. In addition, the college has improved the consistency of its approach to documenting learners' achievement over time. The introduction and development of an achievement database in January 2007 has enabled the college to collate a wide range of information to better monitor learners' progress across all resource centres. Information is analysed in detail to evaluate performance by individual learners, lessons and resource centres. The database, although still developing, is effectively

supporting the college's quality improvement process. However, it has yet to provide a clear, comparative year by year overview of achievement by LSC-funded learners.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in implementing a mentoring process for individual learners and what is has been the impact so far?	Reasonable progress
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Since September 2007, the college's mentoring programme has been expanded across all centres, with every learner, irrespective of ability, allocated a key learning mentor with whom they meet regularly. Each mentor is responsible for undertaking the learners' initial assessment, supporting individual needs and tracking learners' educational and personal learning through an individual learning plan. In a meeting during the monitoring visit, learners expressed how highly they value their link mentor.

To support the mentoring and support role, the college has effectively increased its focus on communication and behaviour. Increased staff training in multi-sensory impairment and use of multi sensory bespoke resources has led to a greater awareness by staff of how best to interpret individual learner behaviour. For example, at the Kettering resource centre analysis was undertaken to determine why some learners were not eating their lunches prepared the night before. In response, a change to the Monday curriculum which enables learners to consider their choice, and make up and eat their lunches on the same day is being trialled. Although not formally recorded, early indications suggest more learners are now eating their sandwiches. The multi-sensory awareness staff training is due to be disseminated further to all staff.

A well-established and detailed behaviour analysis of each learner is undertaken by the college's behavioural consultant. Behavioural incidents are monitored and carefully tracked to review why particular learners react at particularly times and to specific events. This approach has enabled the college and mentors to understand better what learners are communicating and adapt timetable or support needs accordingly. Individual tracking sheets show the vast majority of learners have significant reductions in the number of behaviour incidents recorded over time.

What progress has been made in involving learners in the college's evaluation of the quality of its provision?	Reasonable progress
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The views of individual learners are captured successfully through regular reviews and tutorials with learner mentors. At these, learner views are noted and where relevant, amendments are made to individual learning programmes. However, opportunities to formally collate the views of learners are missed, making it difficult to determine if there are any patterns emerging in relation to aspects of the college's provision that learners feel is exceptionally good or conversely, aspects that could be better.

How has the college improved the explicit promotion of equality and diversity?	Reasonable progress
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Since the last annual assessment visit in October 2006, the college handbook and learner handbook, along with other key documents are now accessible through a range of formats including Braille, symbols, and large print. The wider use of communication approaches gained through multi-sensory training has enabled more learners to participate in sharing their views, through for example, better analysing and using facial expressions and gestures. The introduction of the achievement database has led to a more detailed analysis and tracking of achievement by different groups of learners. Policies for promoting equality of opportunity and race relations are in place but the subsequent action plan/s are not sufficient. Targets are outlined in the policy but there is no separate clear plan as to how these are to be achieved, by whom, by when and how they are to be monitored to measure and review progress.

There are some good examples where cultural diversity has been effectively weaved into activities to stimulate learning. For example one session used a Hindu festival to raise learners' awareness, understanding and enjoyment of culture through the combined exploration of taste and texture through culinary sessions, and authentic ethnic clothing.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in ensuring that staff vetting is monitored centrally according to government guidance?	Significant progress
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The college continues to have rigorous systems in place to vet its staff. All records are now kept centrally in line with government guidance. In addition, a detailed central database has been developed to capture more effectively other related information that supports the vetting of staff working with vulnerable learners, such as the checking of staff qualifications.

What progress has been made in improving the learning environment for learners?	Significant progress
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The new resource centre at Hampton, Peterborough provides a spacious, high quality learning environment. It has been designed specifically to create stimulating surroundings with careful attention given to the décor, layout and the overall practical nature of the building, to ensure it best serves learners' wide range of support needs. The centre also has a garden, not available at the previous centre, which has been designed to appeal to a range of senses.

There is an excellent range of facilities and resources at the centre, which students greatly value and enjoy. There are vibrant displays of learners' work around the corridors and in the workshops. Since the centre opened, it has given a number of learners much greater opportunities for independence. For example, some learners are now able to move around the building without relying solely on support staff for assistance.

Plans are in place to open two new centres to a similarly high specification from September 2008 to replace those at Kettering and Dereham.