

ESPA College

Reinspection report

Provider reference	131872
Published date	23 May 2008

Introduction

ESPA College was inspected in October 2005. Inspectors carried out the inspection under Section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act. The quality of provision was found to be satisfactory or better in all areas inspected, except in leadership and management which was found to be inadequate. Ofsted is responsible for re-inspecting all provision that is inadequate.

The less than satisfactory leadership and management was re-inspected on the 10 and 11 April 2008. The outcomes of the reinspection are as follows.

CIF aspect	Original grade	Reinspection grade
Leadership and Management	4	3

Context

ESPA College is part of European Services for People with Autism (ESPA). The parent organisation is a limited company with charitable status. ESPA College offers both residential and non-residential programmes for 99 young people with autistic spectrum and associated disorders. The provision, spread across three main sites, is based on the ESPA curriculum which is constructed around the key areas of social communication and emotional literacy.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting principal and college senior managers, with support from the parent organisation, provide clarity of vision and ensure that the focus is firmly on improving quality and raising achievements. Significant changes to the college senior management have led to clearer lines of responsibility and more effective decision-making. Strategic planning is comprehensive and much improved. The five-year strategic plan has clear timescales and provides an effective overall framework for improvement. However, links between monitoring the quality of provision and financial priorities are insufficient. A system of devolved budgets is not yet in place and systems of communication relating to finance lack clarity.

Self-assessment processes are much more thorough and the monitoring of the college's performance is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. Action plans are realistic and sufficiently detailed. The college has correctly identified that it needs to improve the consistent application of quality assurance processes. Management information systems is another area for improvement and staff training is scheduled, before the full implementation of an electronic system next term. The trustees have increased their understanding of the work of the college and are increasingly informed about its performance. The college successfully shares good practice across all college sites. The co-ordination of skills for life provision is more coherent. Co-ordinators at each

site are well qualified and skills for life targets are effectively incorporated into lesson planning.

Issues of health and safety are given high priority and thoroughly monitored. Risk assessments are comprehensive and service level contracts with other providers include a health and safety agreement. Since the previous inspection, learners have better representation within college committees such as health and safety and equality and diversity. A single equalities action plan is regularly monitored and impact assessments have been implemented; however, the college has yet to analyse learner achievement by gender and ethnicity.

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: ESPA
Date of visit: 9-10 April 2008

Context

ESPA College is part of European Services for People with Autism (ESPA). It provides day and/or residential education for up to 105 Learning and Skills council funded learners, most of whom have an autistic spectrum disorder. Learners come from within the region and nationally. Many learners attend courses at general further education colleges.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made to maintain and further improve learners' achievements since the previous inspection?	Significant progress
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The college has maintained and improved further the strengths in students' achievements that were identified at the previous inspection. Learners continue to gain a wide range of internal and externally accredited awards. The proportion of students gaining literacy and numeracy awards has increased substantially in recent years. Students make good progress in developing their social and communication skills through a range of enrichment activities. Since the previous inspection, the number of learners gaining skills through voluntary activities or work placement has increased significantly.

Quality of provision

At the last annual assessment visit, some progress had been made in developing assessment procedures and monitoring of learning. What further progress has taken place in 2007/08?	Reasonable progress
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Since the last annual assessment visit, the college has focused on changes to its baseline assessment procedures. A draft policy is now in place and pilot work is being carried out on the system that is being introduced for all new students. The system provides an assessment that is more easily understood by staff and learners are more fully involved in the process. Since the last visit the college has also carried out further staff training on monitoring the progress of learners. The college identified that there was insufficient monitoring of the record of achievement and development (ROAD) system used to record progress and this is now being resolved.

Has the college made progress in sharing good practice across college sites?	Significant progress
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The sharing of good practice has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Communication between staff working at different sites is now good. The appraisal system identifies strengths and areas for development. A mentoring system is in place to disseminate good practice among teachers and support workers. Staff are very enthusiastic about the training they receive to improve their work with learners; this is much better organised than at the previous inspection. Regular curriculum group meetings take place, where themes are identified which help to link work across different parts of the college and different aspects of a learner's programme. Many staff are involved in working parties, where best practice is identified and then implemented across the whole organisation. An example of this is the tutorial programme, where changes made have led to increased learner attendance at sessions.

Leadership and management

To what extent have changes to the co-ordination of skills for life provision improved outcomes for learners?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant progress in developing its skills for life provision since the previous inspection. Literacy and numeracy work is well established in the range of activities offered to learners and is delivered in ways that are relevant to learners' specialist needs and to their individual interests. There have been significant improvements to ensure staff are sufficiently qualified and trained for the roles they carry out in relation to skills for life provision. The suitability of qualifications on offer to learners is kept under review, for example recent changes to information technology qualifications provide more appropriate forms of assessment for learners. Effective sharing of good practice exists across different sites and this has been enhanced by the appointment of a specialist skills for life co-ordinator.