

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Tyne and Wear Autistic Society Adult Services –
Thornbeck College

Date of visit: 4 June 2008

Context

Thornbeck is an independent specialist college for people with autism spectrum disorder, learning difficulties and disabilities. It is a registered charity based in Sunderland and is part of Tyne and Wear Autistic Society Adult Services. Currently 11 learners are funded by the Learning and Skills Council, four of whom are residential.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in learner achievements since the previous inspection and monitoring visit?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress overall in learner achievement since the previous inspection. It has made significant progress in some aspects, particularly the development of communication skills and students' ability to carry out semi-independent travel. The college systematically collects data on students' non-accredited achievement. In 2006/07, the achievement of non-accredited targets varied between 75% and 50% for individual learners. In 2006/07, 70% of learners also achieved accredited qualifications at entry and level 1. The college identified that the range of external accreditation was inadequate. Actions are in place to resolve this through links with local general further education colleges and successful registration with an awarding body to offer BTEC certification. Some learners have already gained units towards the BTEC skills for life business administration qualification. Other accreditation gained this year includes learndirect numeracy certificates.

How well is the college measuring the 'distance travelled' by students in terms of their progress since joining the college?	Reasonable progress
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The college is making reasonable progress to measure the distance travelled by students since they joined the college. Initial assessment is thorough and individual learning plans contain detailed targets. Monitoring of these detailed targets is regular and extensive but insufficient summative judgements are made on the learner's progress. The college's person centred approach to individual learning plans is

successful at engaging students in these processes, and this has been aided significantly by work carried out by the speech and language therapist to improve learners' communication. The college has started to record unplanned achievements and plans are in place to analyse the outcomes.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made to improve the monitoring of teaching and learning since the previous inspection?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant progress in the monitoring of teaching and learning. A well developed system exists for formal observations of lessons; this includes links with other providers to standardise judgements. Staff receive detailed feedback following observations and action plans are developed. Sharing of good practice now has a high priority, including a staff mentoring system, weekly surgeries to discuss teaching and learning and peer observation. An extensive staff development programme is in place, which focuses well on the particular needs of autistic students as well as ensuring staff have basic teaching qualifications. Training for learning support staff is in place to resolve a weakness identified at the previous inspection and observations are planned to evaluate the effectiveness of this training.

What progress been made to resolve the issue of transition planning identified at the previous inspection?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in developing transition plans. Since September these have been integrated into the students' individual learning plans; it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this development. Curriculum change since January 2007 has successfully strengthened the vocational and work related options open to students through the college's business service as well as its links with the external community. As a result of the college's extensive partnership working, students are developing their confidence in a range of community and business settings. Student destinations are carefully monitored; of the four learners who left in 2007, all have supported employment places and half are in supported living arrangements.

Leadership and management

The college judges its overall effectiveness to be good. What progress has been made in developing thorough self-assessment and quality improvement strategies?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in developing its self-assessment and quality improvement strategies. It produces a termly quality improvement report, which is backed up by comprehensive data on all aspects of the student experience. Analysis of this data is insufficiently recorded to explain some of the judgements made in the self-assessment report, particularly for aspects of student achievement. However, clear evidence is available in the college to support its judgements regarding improvements in a number of areas, such as learner communication skills and staff training. Significant improvements have been made in engaging the views of learners.

What progress has the college made to improve its response to equality and diversity legislation?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant progress with this aspect of its work since the previous inspection. It is now compliant with legislative requirements and relevant staff training is in place. An equality and diversity week is part of the college calendar. Impact assessments are being carried out on the implementation of its equalities plan.