

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: St John's College

Date of visit: 10 June 2008

### Context

St John's College is an independent specialist college providing further education (FE). The college is part of the St John's School and College, which has charitable status. It aims to provide a transitional phase for learners between the ages of 16 and 23 who have complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities to help them become increasingly independent citizens. There are currently 84 learners, 63 of whom are male. Of these, 50 are funded through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The college is divided into three faculties: LINC (living, interaction and communication) for young adults with more severe autistic spectrum disorders; Life Skills where learners with severe learning difficulties focus more exclusively on independent living skills; and AVOC (academic and vocational studies) where learners have more moderate difficulties.

### Achievement and standards

What progress has been made during 2007/08 to ensure the new system for recording learning targets is consistently capturing learners' progress across all aspects of their programme?	Reasonable progress
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Further progress has been made this year to the system for recording the monitoring of learners' progress. The system introduced for 2006/07 has been successful in recording targets and progress towards achieving them. However, a review of the process identified that the paper-based system was very time consuming for staff to complete. Teaching staff currently produce hand-written progress records which are then electronically recorded by administration staff. Management's review of the process has led to further improvements. A prototype electronic database system, for recording core targets and separate programme targets, is currently being developed and tested. It is planned to be in use from September 2008.

## Quality of provision

What progress has been made to ensure that all staff use pre-entry and baseline assessment information to establish an understanding of learners' skills levels at the start of their courses?	Significant progress
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Since the last monitoring visit, the college has made significant progress in implementing a system that ensures information relating to learners' skills levels and knowledge is identified at the start of their course. Each scheme of work now incorporates a baseline activity or activities to assess a learner's understanding of the subject or their skills level. At the end of the course, a further activity to review skills learnt is also incorporated into the scheme of work. Activities are varied and depend on the individual learner and subject matter and may include using photographic evidence, a quiz, question and answer or the completion of a questionnaire.

How effective are transition arrangements for learners entering and leaving the college?	Significant progress
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Much work is carried out with learners and their parents/carers prior to their enrolment at the college to ensure a smooth transition on entry. Approximately one third of learners who enter the college each year transfer from St John's school and arrangements are made for individual transition programmes. These may include attending the college part of each week or at a pre-determined time prior to enrolment. All external pre-placement assessments take place over a three-day period, where learners are encouraged to take photographic evidence of the life of the college to assist their transition and act as a reminder of aspects of college life. Effective links exist with a local school for pupils with severe learning difficulties, where class visits are arranged to visit the college. All prospective learners are visited in their home schools by a member of the college as part of the pre-placement assessment. Transition arrangements for leaving the college clearly form part of learners' transition plans which are developed during their first year. Links with a local further education college and arrangements for internal and external work placements are built into learners' overall programmes to assist with transition planning. Learners receive good levels of support in planning and organising their future living arrangements.

## Leadership and management

What progress has been made in implementing the new teaching observation scheme?	Reasonable progress
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A newly formed quality assurance team oversees and monitors all quality improvement arrangements. The college has made reasonable progress in implementing a peer observation scheme. The last few observations are due to take

place this term and the quality assurance team are scheduled to review and moderate records of observations shortly. A very useful and comprehensive matrix of the four grade criteria against performance indicators has been developed. The process was shared with all teaching staff as part of the training for observing teaching and learning.

How well does the college monitor its actions to comply with equalities legislation?	Insufficient progress
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The college has a clear equality and diversity policy and related procedures and it collates and analyses a comprehensive range of equality and diversity data. The college however, has made insufficient progress in monitoring its action to comply with equalities legislation. Whilst the detailed action plan was reviewed in December 2007 and is planned to be reviewed annually, it still does not wholly ensure that actions required are adhered to in accordance with specified dates. The college's equality and diversity policy clearly records the governing body's responsibilities in relation to its requirements of equalities legislation but there is limited implementation of these duties by the governing body. There are no records maintained of relevant governor training or of their involvement with the monitoring of the college's compliance with college policies and equalities legislation.