

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: David Lewis College

Date of visit: 16 June 2008

### Context

David Lewis College, situated in Alderley Edge Cheshire, is a medium sized independent specialist college of further education. The college caters for learners who present with one or more of the following conditions; epilepsy, related neurological and developmental conditions and learning difficulties, communication difficulties and neurologically based behavioural difficulties. The college forms part of the David Lewis Centre set on a 40 acre site in rural Cheshire. The centre provides a range of multidisciplinary support services in clinical, nursing and therapy. Other provision on-site includes a special school, clinical units such as nursing, a challenging behaviour and epilepsy assessment unit, and adult residential services. Currently 65 learners are enrolled at the college and 11 of these attend on a daily basis. Six learners are from a minority ethnic background. David Lewis College was inspected by Ofsted in May 2007 and the overall effectiveness was good. The college is also inspected regularly by CSCI and outcome of the previous inspection was also good.

### Achievements and standards

What improvements have been made to increase the achievement levels of all learners?	Significant progress
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Achievements are recognised as good and are well celebrated across all areas of the provision. Since the previous inspection improvements in the achievement of externally accredited qualifications has been good. These include awards in sports, skills for life, information and communication technology and vocational areas. The overall number of external awards achieved by learners in 2005/06 totalled 60 whereas those in 2006/07 increased to 86. The process for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) is well embedded. Target-setting is improving and targets are more thoroughly monitored. The college has appropriately identified the need to link targets further to baseline assessments and to improve the recognition of prior attainment in key areas, especially for more able learners. Comprehensive plans are in place to resolve these issues for September 2008.

The complex needs strand of the curriculum effectively embraces the principles of RARPA. A range of approaches have been used to promote the recognition, recording and celebration of learner achievement. An example of these innovative approaches includes recording video clips to capture learner's progress. Analysis of the achievement of subject targets correlates well with learner feedback and the findings of lesson observations. The results of the lesson observations successfully contributes to the annual curriculum review. The recording of learner achievements has been refined. This year the data produced is more coherent and can be used to clearly demonstrate progress, or concerns, across the various strands of the curriculum. The college intends to enhance these processes by developing systems for verification and moderation. A traffic light system to record cross-curricular and subject targets provides a good visual overview of learner's progress across the curriculum and makes monitoring easier.

What improvements have been made to strengthen and embed skills for life throughout the curriculum?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made effective progress with embedding skills for life across all areas of the curriculum. A comprehensive and revised initial assessment and six week baseline assessment summary now ensure that individual targets identify distance travelled. As a result of the recent curriculum review the college registered with different awarding schemes which were more relevant to accredit learners' literacy and numeracy skills. A significant increase has occurred in the number of learners taking and achieving national awards from eight in 2005/06, to 15 in 2006/07, to 38 in 2007/08. However, learner achievements in literacy were greater than those in numeracy. The skills for life team has increased to include three tutors in this area; all have a level 3 or level 4 qualification in skills for life. A significant amount of staff training has taken place. Future plans include enabling learning support staff to gain literacy and numeracy qualifications.

#### Quality of provision

How well has the college tackled the weakness of the insufficient specialist communication and sensory support for learners with complex needs?	Significant progress
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This area has been very well resolved since the previous inspection. Staff have good access to relevant training in specialist communication and sensory support for learners with complex needs. The teaching areas have been relocated to new purpose designed accommodation known as the Kirk building. It is fit for purpose and provides a much improved learning environment. A more appropriate curriculum has been put into place that successfully highlights communication within a sensory approach to learning. Contributions from the speech and language therapist have increased. She now works within the classroom to guide and support staff with learners who have complex needs, in addition to clinical interventions with specific individuals. She also attends learners'

annual reviews as required. An additional full-time speech and language therapist post has been advertised and a contract with the augmentative communication specialist organisation, ACE Centre North, is being negotiated. Individual learning plans are now more focused upon improved communication outcomes and targets are effectively set using a multi-disciplinary approach with contributions from tutors, support staff, communication co-ordinator, speech and language therapist and physiotherapist. Learners' participation and achievement has increased in communication activities and awards such as the English Speaking Board. Collaborative working arrangements with the range of multi-disciplinary staff promote benefits for learners with a more holistic approach to meeting their complex needs. A good range of specialist resources has been purchased so that each classroom in the Kirk building now contains an interactive whiteboard and other specialist resources such as talking mats, talking books, switching technology and communication boards.

### Leadership and management

<p>What progress has been made to resolve the insufficient understanding by some staff of the needs of learners with complex learning difficulties?</p>	<p>Significant progress</p>
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The college has made a significant investment in the continuing professional development of staff, particularly those who work with learners with complex difficulties. A total communication policy has recently been implemented to enable staff to have a better understanding of learners' needs, to improve consistency and to promote the use of a range of teaching methodologies. Regular meetings have been established to set and review individual learning plans for both college and residential staff. Learning support staff now attend regular team briefings. All staff are actively encouraged to share good practice including those who work with learners with complex needs. All staff are helped to learn Makaton signing. Makaton signs and symbols are clearly displayed around college. The effective use of teaching and learning observations and the related mentoring and support has resulted in an improvement in the proportion of teaching and learning observations which are good or better. College data indicates that these increased to around 80% in the most recent round of observations. From the start of this year all learning support assistants have been observed in lessons. These outcomes are used to identify and share good practice, to contribute to team training plans and to inform managers.

What progress has been made to develop long-term planning processes and to further improve leadership and management?	Reasonable progress
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The David Lewis Centre is now reviewing and evaluating its services overall and a long-term plan has been produced which includes a contribution from the college. This, along with the publication of the Learning and Skills Council regional strategy will enable the college to draw together its development, improvement and strategic planning to present a more coherent overview. The restructuring of the management of both education and residential teams has had a positive impact as these teams take ownership and responsibility for their own areas and manage the quality improvement processes. The appointment of a new programme manager in complex needs and the strengthening of the staff team has brought about benefits for the learners. There was a strong focus on mandatory training during 2006/07 and, in line with the three year development plan, in ensuring that all staff have or are actively working to appropriate professional qualifications. The plan for continuing professional development will be extended to incorporate training required for strategic development and quality improvement. The centre places a very high priority on safeguarding. All staff are effectively trained and the importance of following procedures is given prominence.