

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: West of England College

Date of visit: 6 May 2009

The West of England College is an independent specialist residential college for learners with sight loss and complex needs. It is situated in 16 acres of land in the city of Exeter. The College provides further education and independence training for young people aged 16–25. At the previous inspection, in April 2008, all aspects of the college were judged to be good.

### Achievement and standards

How successfully are learners' achieving work related skills?	Reasonable progress
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Learners have good access to a wide range of work related placements that meet their interests and abilities, enabling them to practice and achieve work related skills. Learners are making reasonable progress in achieving these skills. Staff who organise and support learners before and during placements have a good understanding of the vocational skills that learners achieve. However, some records of work experience, including tasks that learners are expected to do while on placement and employer reports, are insufficiently detailed and do not provide learners with clear criteria to easily evaluate how successful they have been.

### Quality of provision

How successfully has the professional development of learning support workers been implemented?	Significant progress
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Since the previous inspection, significant progress has been made in developing the skills of learning support workers (LSWs). Induction arrangements for new LSWs have been extended from two to three days and training in specific issues relating to their areas of work within the college has been well planned. The college implemented intensive training sessions for two terms to ensure that all LSWs received extended training initially. An organisation working with people who are deaf and blind has provided additional development opportunities for 22 LSWs over the last two terms, through an intensive training programme. Working with the Southwest workforce development partnership, the college has assisted in the development of a new course, aimed at supporting learning support practitioners who are working in a range and variety of contexts in both generic and specialist provision. The development of the course and subsequent train-the-trainer modules

have been supported and funded by the local skills council. The well written course materials consist of two modules including a series of specialist units to meet the different needs of practitioners. The college is currently negotiating external accreditation to promote it to a wider audience.

How successfully has the college improved arrangements for staff to share good practice?	Reasonable progress
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Reasonable progress has been made to improve the sharing of good practice amongst staff across the college. Teaching and learning observations continue to identify examples of good aspects of teaching and learning. Specific observations of the performance of LSWs are in the process of being fully implemented. Weekly management meetings review and evaluate performance of staff and information about performance is taken to departmental meetings, where good practice examples and issues are shared. Arrangements are in place for skilled teachers to share aspects of teaching and learning with their peers. The regular multi-professional meetings provide opportunities for all staff to share knowledge and information about good practices of work, specifically with individual learners. West of England College is an active member of an innovative new e-learning platform, which is currently being developed for all Devon schools and education providers. The platform is designed to provide access to joint areas on the site which will allow information to be shared between staff, parents, learners and trustees for example. As part of this project, the college is also being supported to develop its own internal e-learning platform.

#### Leadership and management

How successfully do the views of learners, parents/carers, employers, staff and governors inform the college's self-assessment process?	Significant progress
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Significant progress has been made in seeking the views of all its stakeholders. Parent questionnaires are based on the themes of every child matters. An active 'parents as partners' group is well established. The group is made up of approximately 40 members; about half are parents of college learners and the other half are school pupils. Sub-focus groups undertake a good variety of specific tasks, such as a recently completed project on communications. This explored aspects and differences of communications between the school and parents and college staff and parents. Another subgroup was involved in the restructuring of the health team. A recently developed neighbours group has been implemented as a result of the college purchasing a house within the local community. Good opportunities exist for staff to provide feedback into the self-assessment process via formal consultations and during supervision feedback forums. Governors' views contribute to the self-assessment process. Learners are actively involved in providing feedback through a range of forums and are included in some staff recruitment processes. Although

employers' views are sought about learners' work-placements, their views about the college as a whole are not systematically obtained.

How successfully has the college improved its analysis and use of management information?	Significant progress
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The analysis and use of management information has been significantly improved since the previous inspection. The new management information system in place at the time of the previous inspection is continuing to be developed. It is providing a rich source of information on individual learners' targets and achievements as well as evaluations of achievements of different groups of learners. The college's analysis of this data is providing management with the evidence to set clear targets for improvements. For example, an analysis of functional skills highlighted that female learners are not achieving as well as male learners in numeracy. Management have set a range of targets to improve the teaching of numeracy along with related expected outcomes of improved achievement rates. Detailed analysis is also provided in relation to gender, entry to college, visual impairment types, learning difficulties, physical and hearing impairment and additional needs. Some analysis has been undertaken in relation to ethnicity. The number of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is small, and no significant differences have been identified.