

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: St Elizabeth's College

Date of visit: 27 April 2009

### Context

St Elizabeth's College (the college) is located at Much Hadham near Bishop's Stortford in East Hertfordshire. The college predominantly enrolls learners with a range of moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities with the aim of developing skills to support independent living. Currently there are 36 Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded students aged between 19 and 25 years enrolled at the college and all are tenants of housing associations in either Much Hadham or Bishop's Stortford. There is an even gender mix with 19 female and 17 male students. Around 14% of learners are of minority ethnic heritage.

### Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in improving the consistency and quality of target setting to effectively measure learners' achievement?	Reasonable progress
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A nationally-accredited framework is now in place to help provide a consistent and more coherent approach to setting individual learner targets. The overall quality of target setting on students' individual development plans, particularly for year one students, has improved. There is now greater coordination of learners' target setting across the college with all targets more systematically reviewed through four senior curriculum tutors. However, the college has not yet undertaken a formal audit of learners' individual development plans to determine the consistency of target setting across all year groups, whether learners are working too long on the same targets, or if some learners' Skills for Life targets remain over ambitious.

All staff have received training in how to set more focused and appropriate learning targets. The college are now better placed to monitor and track the proportion of learners who achieve their long term targets and the progress they are making. Learner destinations continue to be positive, with seven out of nine learners successfully moving into supported independent living last year.

## Quality of provision

How effective are the steps taken to ensure the effective delivery of the Skills for Life curriculum?	Insufficient progress
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The college has rightly identified Skills for Life provision as a key area for further development within its self-assessment report. Some progress has been made in developing the provision but overall several aspects have been slow to materialise or are still at the very early stages of development. There is currently no clear overall leadership of the Skills for Life provision although a new vice principal, due to take up post in September 2009, will have designated responsibility for taking the Skills for Life agenda forward.

The college has refined its Skills for Life policy with a greater emphasis on the importance of target setting for individual learners. All first year learners will be following nationally-accredited Skills for Life qualifications, with this being extended to year two learners from September 2009. It was too early at the time of the monitoring visit to gauge learners' achievement on these qualifications. A revised timetabled weekly shopping session has proved popular with learners and is helping to hone their general skills such as planning, making choices and handling money.

Staff have received relevant training to help raise their awareness of Skills for Life and help improve the setting of learner targets; however, insufficient action has been taken to ensure all those who teach numeracy and literacy are qualified to do so.

To what extent has the college made progress in increasing the involvement of students in all aspects of their learning?	Reasonable progress
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The college is effectively increasing learners' involvement across several aspects of their learning. The college's internal observation process is beginning to focus more sharply on the degree of learners' involvement and participation in lessons. A college questionnaire undertaken in May 2008 showed 57% of all learners felt they were involved in discussions on their individual learning targets. In response, the college is in the process of redesigning all learner individual development plans to be much more student friendly and accessible. Tutors have received training in target setting with a focus on how to better engage learners in the process. As a result, learners are gradually being encouraged to have greater involvement in the setting and reviewing of their own learning goals.

The college seeks learners' views through an annual questionnaire and through feedback from learners who attend the college's equality and diversity group. Some learners were involved in a project to help produce the May 2008 learner survey,

contributing to the writing of questions and the analysis of results. The college listens to the views of its learners, however the college's systems for feeding back actions taken in response to learners' views remain underdeveloped. Currently minutes of meetings are posted on notice boards around the campus, although not all learners are aware of this or can easily interpret the written information. The college have a clear learner involvement strategy, but there is no plan to support its full implementation. The creation of a formal student council is in its early stages of development and being coordinated, with appropriate tutor support, by a student.

#### Leadership and management

How effectively is the college improving the consistency and rigour regarding monitoring the quality of teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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The college has begun to improve its process for observing the quality of teaching and learning. Random sampling by inspectors of the college's observation documentation indicates a greater focus on learning by college observers. The college observation team has grown from one to three observers and the number of observations has increased this year by more than 50%. Observations are more evenly and appropriately disseminated between observers. The college profile for the proportion of good or better teaching is more realistic and identifies the need to increase the proportion of good and better teaching.

Tutorials are not currently included in the college's observation process; however, an audit of tutorial provision, undertaken by managers in March 2009, identified improvements in some areas but the need for greater recording by tutors during the learners individual review sessions. As a result, adjustments have been made to the timing of tutorials which have been positively received by tutors. A further audit is planned for July 2009 to measure the impact of the actions taken.

The college's formal moderation of the lesson observations has improved. Joint observations are undertaken by college observers with external consultants and a few joint observations are undertaken between college observers. However, there is no formal moderation of written observation reports to promote consistency or the sharing of good practice.

The college has revised its observation documentation with the intention of better capturing feedback on equality and diversity and numeracy and literacy within lessons. However, there has been no overall analysis or report of teaching and learning observations to determine if this is actually taking place in lessons.

What progress has been made in monitoring the promotion of equality and diversity in regards to government legislation?	Reasonable progress
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The college's single equality scheme has been further refined and now includes all six equality strands. There is a separate race, gender and disability scheme with relevant actions plans in place but several targets within these are not sufficiently measurable or quantified. There is now a much more detailed analysis of staffing by age, gender and ethnicity, providing a firmer base by which to plan improvement. However, as yet there has been no similar analysis undertaken for the governing body and with the exception of the governor championing equality and diversity, governors have not yet received formal training on equalities.

All college staff received training in 2008 on equality and diversity and a rolling programme of further equalities training, including level 1 online training, is planned throughout this year. Managers are beginning to raise the profile of equality and diversity across the college and it is becoming gradually embedded through the college's operational processes. For example, equality and diversity now features in staff appraisal, staff team meetings and as a regular feature in the centre's news bulletin. All college publicity materials have been reviewed to ensure they positively promote race, gender and age. Further improvements have also been made to the college site to improve access for learners.

Progress on improving the promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum is mixed. Lesson plans have been redesigned to enable teachers to review and plan opportunities to explore equality and diversity themes and tutors encourage relevant discussions with learners. The college have not however carried out an audit of learning materials to determine if they all sufficiently promote equality and challenge stereotypes. The overall performance of different groups of learners is undertaken but not sufficiently summarised or made explicit in the college's self-assessment report. The college has been slow in undertaking equality impact assessments.

