

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: David Lewis College

Date of visit: 22 June 2009

Context

David Lewis College is an independent specialist residential and day further education college for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many also have neurological disorders such as epilepsy and autism with associated behaviours. The college is situated in the village of Warford, two miles from Alderley Edge and within reach of Manchester. The college forms part of the David Lewis Centre and is set on a 40 acre site in rural Cheshire. The centre provides a range of multi-disciplinary support services in clinical, nursing and therapy. Other provision on-site includes a special school, clinical units such as nursing, challenging behaviour and epilepsy assessment, and adult residential services. The college mission is 'preparing students as they transition into adulthood'. 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. Five learners are funded through The Welsh Assembly Government. David Lewis College was inspected by Ofsted in May 2007 and overall effectiveness was judged to be good. The college is also inspected regularly by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and the outcome of the previous inspection was also good.

Achievement and standards

What improvements have been made to the setting of targets and recording of progress at all levels across the college?	Reasonable progress
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The implementation of the framework for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) is being increasingly embedded across the college. Improved clarity about the five stages of the RARPA framework is evident, especially with regard to the aims for each individual programme. Managers have an increased focus on enabling staff to identify clear goals for each learner. Initial assessment is comprehensive and outcomes are used effectively to establish a robust baseline summary for each learner. Individual care, support and learning plans are reviewed and amended each term, or as required to ensure that learners make good progress. Learners have improved opportunities to take nationally recognized awards in a range of subjects and results are improving over time. The self-assessment report identifies that the overall number of external awards achieved by learners in 2005/06 totalled 60,

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whereas those in 2007/08 totalled 86. A Skills for Working Life award now includes access to catering, small animal care and horticulture awards. Enrolments on these awards have increased from four in 2007/08 to eight in 2008/09. Access to entry level adult literacy awards has also increased from 26 entrants in 2007/08 to 33 in 2008/09 and those for numeracy awards have increased from four in 2007/08 to 13 in 2008/09. Learners' progress towards achieving these qualifications is well documented on the management information system (MIS) and in their annual reviews. However, the college does not adequately collate or use learner destination data to bring about further improvement.

Quality of Provision

How well has the college developed its learner involvement strategy?	Reasonable progress
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The college has placed good emphasis on developing strategies to involve all learners in their education and future life. There is a formal well developed learner involvement strategy with regularly reviewed action plans. Learner views were regularly sought and acted upon in the past but now there are plans to formalise these processes and to make them much more coherent. A student council, which has applied to be affiliated to the National Union of Students, is planned for September 2009 resulting in an increased representation of learners on college committees. A draft constitution has been drawn up for the student council. Plans are in place to improve the ability of all learners to actively contribute to decision making groups such as governors, health and safety and equality and diversity. The college employs good approaches to behaviour management which includes a comprehensive support network and a close working relationship with East Cheshire Advocacy Service. Good use is made of communication books for learners with complex needs.

Leadership & Management

What developments have taken place with regard to the promotion of equality and diversity across all aspects of the curriculum?	Insufficient progress
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The college has appropriate policies and procedures in place in relation to equalities legislation. Action plans are being implemented but impact assessments are yet to be fully completed across the education provision. The promotion of equality and diversity has recently been given greater focus. A comprehensive programme of cultural events has been established and staff and learners are taking a more active role in raising cultural awareness across the college. Governors have been trained to ensure they meet their responsibilities in relation to equalities legislation. All staff have received training in relation to their roles in equality and diversity. However the college is very aware that, as many of these developments are recent, it is not yet possible to fully evaluate their overall impact. Equality and diversity impact measures have been

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identified and information collected but this has yet to be analysed. Curriculum self-assessment reports are not sufficiently detailed as to how well equality and diversity is promoted within teaching and learning. In order to address these issues the college has just appointed an equality and diversity coordinator. The post holder has held this position for one month and has recently participated in a range of training opportunities. Teaching and learning observations this term will focus on identifying good practice in equality and diversity. The outcomes will be disseminated at the end of term continuing professional development activities and will inform the new self-assessment report. The college has not identified in their equality and diversity action plan the need to analyse learner achievements in relation to race, gender and disability.

How effective are quality improvement processes and management information systems (MIS) in gathering and using data to improve learner achievements?	Reasonable progress
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Realistic and comprehensive quality improvement action plans are well established and are regularly monitored. Evidence of progress across all areas in the college is being developed. MIS systems are used effectively to bring about further improvement. For example, new baseline assessments were introduced at the beginning of this academic year and they now appropriately identify and focus upon learners' long term goals. This information is used successfully to drive the individual learner programmes and to better record learners' progress over time. Analysis of work experience opportunities identified the need to increase these placements which have now increased from 14 in 2007/08 to 58 placements in 2008/09. Good progress has been made in tackling the weakness of the insufficient specialist communication and sensory support for learners with complex needs. The quality improvement cycle focuses on different aspects of provision each month and outcomes of these processes appropriately inform the board of governors and the executive team. The college has recently been through a significant management restructure and senior managers recognise the need for increased coherence across multi-disciplinary staff teams.

How well has the college responded to guidelines on safe recruitment practices and safeguarding?	Insufficient progress
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Whilst the college is rigorous in its application of CRB checks for all staff, it has not made sufficient progress with relation to meeting guidelines on safe recruitment practices and safeguarding. The single central record of vetting and recruitment checks is not comprehensive or checked adequately by senior managers. For example, although checks are made on volunteers, the outcomes are not recorded on the single central record nor does it include information about staff from outside the UK and their employment status and overseas record checks. Effective multi-disciplinary interventions and safeguarding training for all staff is given high priority and has resulted in a decrease in the number of referrals to external agencies, from 34 in 2007/08 to eight in 2008/09. These agencies now have significantly increased confidence in the ability of David Lewis staff to deal with serious incidents on-site.

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There are now more robust admissions procedures with clarity about expectations for learners. Induction processes include good attention to health, safety and safeguarding issues. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place and learner safety is prioritized. The risk-assessment processes are comprehensive and are well embedded into college systems. A pack of information, available in a variety of formats, is used by learners to help them to better understand the concept of a safe learner. Good links exist with other agencies and there is a nominated governor with responsibility for safeguarding.