

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: The Royal West of England College for the Deaf
(renamed as the Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education)

Date of visit: 29 October 2007

Context

The Royal West of England College for the Deaf, now renamed as The Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education, comprises a school for learners aged 5-16, a college for learners aged 16 and over, and a department known as 'Educational Development' serving the needs of the learners and the external community through extended/outreach services. The Royal West of England College was last inspected in March 2005. The college's overall effectiveness was judged to be satisfactory but leadership and management were judged to be unsatisfactory. The leadership and management was re-inspected in March 2007 and judged to be satisfactory. Currently there are 67 learners attending the college, of which 22 learners are funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

Achievement and standards

What judgments can be made about success rates in 2006-07 including key skills achievements?	Significant progress
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There have been very good achievements on most programmes. The college's own programmes perform particularly well with many having 100% achievement rates. The achievement rates on the BSL, and literacy and numeracy programmes have had more varied results but they have still been good. Externally accredited courses also do well. At levels 2 and 3 achievement rates are 100% and at level 1 the achievement rate is 78%. All learners who took additional qualifications in 2006/07 such as emergency first aid, life savers bronze medallion and the Royal Yacht Association start sailing course achieved their qualification.

The college do not currently produce trend data so comparison between years is not possible. However, the college are beginning to use the management information system to collate data on achievements and plan to use trend data in their self assessment report once the new system is fully operational.

What information does the college hold about the destination of leavers in 2006-07?	Significant progress
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In 2007 there were seven college leavers and most moved into appropriate destinations. Five learners are either employed or studying in further or higher education. One learner is living at home and is in a sheltered placement and one learner has not managed to secure employment. The college also keeps track of previous leavers for at least three years and records show that learners have maintained employment and/or training.

Quality of provision

At the last monitoring visit in March 2007 the college had developed and put in place an appropriate literacy and numeracy strategy but it was too early to judge the impact of the strategy on meeting learners' varied needs. How effective has the literacy and numeracy strategy been in meeting learners' varied needs in 2006/07?	Reasonable progress
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The literacy and numeracy strategy is now in operation. The range of programmes offered from pre entry level to level 3 provides support for learners within the college and those who attend local further education (FE) colleges. More specific hearing impaired related support in English and mathematics is now offered within the college for those learners attending local FE colleges. Although appropriate resources have been acquired the college still find some difficulty in accessing material catering for the specific needs of the hearing impaired. There is an emphasis on using everyday functional tasks to stimulate interest and confidence for learners, which staff say has worked well.

The recording of individual progress against a baseline assessment remains underdeveloped. For learners working on milestones a system of target setting is in operation. Progress is recorded by tutors after each session and tracked against the accreditation requirements but this is not always sufficiently recorded against individual base line assessments.

<p>At the last monitoring visit staff had a good understanding of the progress being made by learners but there was no system to give a succinct overview of learners' progress for monitoring purposes. The college was in the process of developing a management information system which was to be fully operational by the summer of 2007. Has the college successfully managed to implement the new system to provide clear reports on learners' progress? What is the quality of the reports and do staff use them effectively?</p>	<p>Insufficient progress</p>
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Staff know the levels and needs of individual learners and address their needs well. There is good informal communication between staff to monitor and report on progress and achievement across all aspects of the learner experience. The MIS system is in operation though currently it only contains personal and funding information for each individual. There is the intention to use it to monitor achievement but as yet there is no base line information or progress reporting available, even for those learners who started at the college in September. The current paper based reports vary considerably. The targets learners are set for their courses, for their person centred plans and for care, are reported separately, with missed opportunities to formalise recording and planning. The base line assessment information for learners who started in September appears incomplete in learners' files. Some of the targets for learners attending FE colleges are too broad to be measurable. While reporting formats have been standardized these are not used consistently.

Leadership and management

<p>What staff training has taken place since the last monitoring visit, particularly related to mental health and behaviour management? What has been the impact of the training on the learners' experience?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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Since the last monitoring visit in March 2007 all staff have had training in behaviour management. The college commissioned external trainers to deliver the training. The aims of the training are to increase safety in the work environment for staff and service users, identify the risk of violence and learn prevention skills. All staff have completed parts one and two of the training and one third have completed part three. The other two thirds of staff are to complete part three in November.

Staff report that they have found the training very useful as it has helped them to develop strategies for dealing with the challenging behaviour displayed by some learners. It has also helped them to develop techniques for avoiding confrontational situations. The fact that all staff had the training first hand was seen as beneficial, but staff feel that the challenge now is to maintain the momentum and to ensure that follow-up training takes place.

Although informal evaluation has taken place in staff team meetings, the college has not yet formally evaluated the quality of the training or the impact of the training on learners. There are plans to evaluate the training once the third part has been fully completed in November and evaluation of the impact of the training on learners will be monitored through observations of teaching and learning.

There has been some very good staff training for all new staff. As well as covering topics such as deaf awareness and child protection, staff also had a two-day intensive British Sign Language course.

<p>At the last MV inspectors identified that outcomes of regular staff meetings were now formally recorded but that responsibilities for the completion of actions and dates by which actions should be completed were not always identified. Has the college improved the recording and follow through of actions from staff meetings?</p>	<p>Insufficient progress</p>
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There has been insufficient progress in the way the college records and follows through actions from staff meetings. This process needs developing in order to demonstrate that actions have been taken and the impact measured. There are few staff meetings recorded in 2006/07 and there is a lack of consistency in the way the meetings are recorded. There are, however, examples of good practice such as the minutes from the teaching assistant meetings.