

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: National Star College

Date of visit: 23 June 2009

### Context

The National Star College is part of the National Star Centre for Disabled Youth, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. A board of governors, who are also trustees and directors, oversee the college. The college is situated in a rural area on the outskirts of Cheltenham. It is an independent, specialist college for residential and full-time day learners, all of whom are aged between 16 and 25, and have physical disabilities and/or acquired brain injuries, alongside associated learning, behavioural, sensory and medical difficulties.

Programmes are offered in visual and performing arts, information and communication technology, business administration, health and social care, sport and recreation and preparation for life and work. Currently there are 160 learners, 20 who attend on a daily basis.

### Achievement and standards

How much progress has been made in learners' achievement of part awards?	Significant progress
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The focus on opportunities to study towards units of accreditation has resulted in a significant increase in the number of learners both enrolling and being successful. Overall, 97% of learners in 2007/08 were successful in gaining externally accredited units in learning for living and work, administration, leisure and tourism and in creative arts, such as photography, pottery and art, and craft and design. All 57 learners who enrolled were successful with additional accreditation for extended studies in Sports UK dance leaders' award, community sports leaders awards, Duke of Edinburgh awards or cookery.

The number of learners who successfully gained part awards for literacy and numeracy rose slightly in 2007/08 with 31 having achieved compared with 23 the previous year. The number of learners entered for literacy and numeracy units at entry level has shown a significant rise over the past few years alongside a decline at level 2.

## Quality of provision

How much progress has the college made with its employer engagement strategy?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant progress with its employer engagement strategy. Significantly more learners are involved with work experience. Up until June this year 135 learners had been involved in 257 placements compared with last year where 99 learners had 134 placements. The college uses a diverse range of venues and settings both within its campus and college operations as well as with external employers to provide learners with work related opportunities. This includes the annual 'employability plus' festival, where local businesses exhibit and specialist information, advice and guidance for people with disabilities is available. Much work has been undertaken to engage with large corporate organisations both locally and nationally. The college is inspirational in developing these links to encourage 'employer ambassadors' to work proactively with the college to share information relating to the needs of industry and help direct future curriculum planning at the college. Social enterprise activities are being well planned. These include a joint venture with a local college retail outlet where National Star college learners will sell art and craft products and a horticulture enterprise that is being developed for learners enrolled on the preparation for employment programme and their locally based allotment. An innovative social enterprise, SPEAK, is being established where the skills of a learner are being developed with the help of a local employer to set up an on-line advocacy service for people with physical disabilities. The employer is providing a location and member of staff to support the enterprise. As well as a variety of other employer based activities, the college is currently carrying out a feasibility study on the possibility of introducing training in call centre operations as part of home working access initiatives.

How much progress has been made using the model of personalised learning?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant progress in establishing its model of personalised learning to better support its learners. Over the past year the number of personalised learning mentors (PLMs) has risen to 15, one of whom is part-time to assist with the number of day learners. This system has replaced the personal tutorial arrangements of three hours per week for each learner to a system where each PLM works within the role full-time to co-ordinate all aspects of learners' programme and timetables. Their activities include identification of primary learning goals, planning and links with appropriate therapies, completion of individual learning plans and reviews of progress. There is a greater focus on ensuring that transition planning takes place at an earlier stage in learners' placement at the college. Mentors have a diverse range of experience and qualifications, ranging from qualified teachers to staff whose primary experience are within residential settings. All those without teaching qualifications are currently working towards completing one this year. Learners have greater opportunities to personalise their own programmes and make real choices to include additional options alongside their core programme subjects. All PLMs are

based within the residences but act as an independent team and provide support in particular to staff in the residences.

### Leadership and management

How much progress has been made in using data to monitor the performance and destinations of different groups of learners?	Reasonable progress
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Reasonable progress has been made by the college in using data to monitor the performance and destinations of different groups of learners. Data is collated on a wide range of aspects and activities including applications for enrolment and recruitment, achievement, destinations and work-placements. Data is also provided in relation to gender and minority ethnic background with tables and graphs providing some comparisons over the past few years. However, while the college sets actions for itself-against targets there is insufficient formally recorded analysis of the data.