

Hinwick Hall College

Focused monitoring visit report

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Hinwick Hall is a specialist independent college situated close to the Northamptonshire border. The college forms part of a national charity and provides for learners with complex communication, physical and learning difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit there were 52 learners enrolled. Of these, 35 were male and 17 were female and 17 learners were of minority ethnic heritage. All learners are currently funded through the LSC with 39 residential students and 13 day students.

Since the last monitoring visit, the college has gained re-registration as a care home with 14 registered nursing beds. A large programme of refurbishment has been completed to extend students' social and teaching accommodation.

The most recent inspection report was published in March 2008. The college was graded satisfactory in overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management. The last monitoring visit in March 2009 looked at five themes and judged the college to be making significant progress in one, reasonable progress in three and insufficient progress in one of these.

Between May and December 2009, three key senior managers left the college including the previous newly appointed principal. An acting principal, vice principal and interim residential managers are in place to enable the college to continue to run operationally and it is planned that permanent appointments will be advertised and filled by May 2010. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in strengthening the self-assessment process and report to clearly identify the college's priorities for improvement?	Reasonable progress
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The 2008/09 self-assessment report is written using the new inspection framework and makes clear judgments about each aspect of provision. Overall, it appears an honest and evaluative report and clearly identifies areas for improvement. Its judgments made against most of the specific themes followed during the visit broadly match the evidence found by inspectors. The self-assessment process has improved and the college involves all staff in the review of its provision. Increased analysis of different aspects of the student experience is used well to support judgments although there is limited reference to the direct views of students throughout the report. Elements of the students' personal development, particularly around some of the broader outcomes of Every Child Matters are underplayed and do not fully reflect the impact of some of the work which is effectively developing the skills to support students' future economic well-being.

How much progress has been made in using specific, measurable key performance indicators to assess the college's progress and performance over time? Insufficient progress

The quality improvement plan is comprehensive in its coverage of what the college needs to do to improve further. However, it lacks sufficient measurable targets to be able to gauge progress. This was raised as an area for improvement at the previous monitoring visit.

The improvement plan includes frequent progress updates but these are too descriptive and evidence of improvement in many cases is narrative rather than evaluative. The lack of rigour in applying sharp performance targets impacts across all aspects of the college's monitoring and improvement processes. Senior managers, middle managers and governors are therefore less able to measure, evaluate and reflect effectively on the college's performance over time.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in developing students' work-related skills? Reasonable progress

The college has continued to extend the opportunities to support students' work-related skills. Since the last visit positive link arrangements have been developed with a local agricultural college and a work-based learning provider to provide opportunities to extend students' personal development and offer a range of vocationally orientated activities. Additional work placements are being developed on the college site within the areas of general maintenance and catering. Further links are being forged with other external providers to widen students' choice. Students' social interaction and work-related skills are gradually improving as a result.

The college has revised the way it tracks and records the achievement of work-related skills although this has yet to be fully embedded. The college recognise that the quality of the records is still inconsistent.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning? Reasonable progress

College managers have developed a more structured and comprehensive approach to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning this academic year. As a part of the wider schedule of lesson observations, observations also include educational support staff and tutorial provision, as well as additional ungraded development observations. The college has introduced appropriate arrangements for moderating

the observation team's judgments about lessons. These include more formalised joint observations and external scrutiny of the written lesson observation documentation and subsequent individual staff development plans. College data show an increasing proportion of good and better lessons this academic year.

The analysis of teaching and learning by managers is increasingly detailed. It considers the quality of lessons by level and subject which has enabled the college to identify further bespoke training. Recent findings, for example, focused staff training sessions on how teachers and support staff can more effectively stretch the learning of the more able students. It was too early to judge the full impact of this at the time of the monitoring visit.

What progress has been made in engaging with students and employers to help drive improvement in the quality of provision? Reasonable progress

The college uses the views and feedback from students well to improve the quality of provision and students' learning experience. For example, student feedback gathered through the student council and various surveys have initiated significant changes to accommodation including the creation of additional social spaces and have led to improved food choices, widened enrichment activities and led to more flexible approaches to timetabling. The college has appropriate mechanisms in place for feeding back to students on how it has responded to their suggestions, such as through pictorial notice boards, student governors and tutorial sessions. It does not yet utilise information learning technology (ILT) as well as it could to support the learner voice. The college has begun to take steps to extend the student voice beyond the college through external student conferences and links with the local authority. A clear learner involvement strategy exists but processes to implement and monitor this are less well defined. The views of different groups of students are not currently analysed or reported.

Engagement with parents is satisfactory. Very recent efforts have been made to survey the views of employers and other stakeholders but the response rate has been very low.

Leadership and management

How much progress has the college made in actively promoting equality and diversity? Insufficient progress

The college has policies in place for gender, disability and race but has no implementation plans to enable it to monitor the active promotion of equality and diversity across the college for staff and students. The management of equality is too fragmented and as a result the college has no coherent overview to enable it to celebrate what it is doing well and what it needs to do to improve further. The college has been slow to introduce equality impact assessments.

Positive steps have been taken to promote equality and diversity more systematically through lessons. Outcomes from a staff survey on equality and diversity has been used effectively to steer relevant training and help raise staff awareness. Equality and diversity impact measures (EDIMs) are in place but the targets are far too broad for progress against them to be easily assessed. Data analysis, evaluation and target-setting in this area of the college are less well developed.

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