

Henshaws College

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent specialist college

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Henshaws College is a national specialist, residential further education (FE) college for learners who are blind or partially sighted with additional difficulties. It is located on a 12 acre rural site on the outskirts of Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The college forms part of Henshaws Yorkshire, the biggest of three regions of Henshaws Society for Blind People. This is a registered charity based in the north of England. The college principal is the regional chief executive officer (CEO) and reports to the regional board of management. The college mission statement is to empower students with skills and confidence to maximise their independence and employability, minimise the effects of their disability and achieve success through their transition to adult life. The college was judged to be good at the previous inspection in March 2006. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What is the provider's capacity to make and sustain improvements? How effective is self-assessment and improvement planning?

Significant
progress

The process of self-assessment is comprehensive and rigorous and regularly secures improvements. The report is detailed with good use of data to support judgements. Areas for improvement, identified at the last full inspection, have been effectively addressed and are now strengths. There is a strong culture of continuous improvement and promotion of excellence. The management team and the regional board of management demonstrate a very good capacity for improvement. Performance is well monitored with successful outcomes judged against key performance indicators. The comprehensive quality cycle, including curriculum reviews and a rigorous teaching and learning observation programme, promotes improvement at each stage of planning. Teaching and learning are of a high standard; in 2008/09, 83% of lessons were graded good or better and none was judged to be inadequate. Strategic planning is very good and is linked effectively to local and national priorities. There are excellent partnerships with a wide variety of organisations, including schools, FE colleges, independent specialist colleges, employers, community groups and local authorities. These well planned and effectively monitored partnerships help to enhance provision by increasing learner involvement, further promoting achievement and providing increased rigour for quality processes.

Outcomes for learners

How well is the college continuing to improve outcomes for learners since the last visit? Significant progress

Learners achieve well at Henshaws. Learners are set, and are inspired to achieve, challenging targets. Good use is made of a range of accreditation opportunities to ensure that learners of all abilities can gain appropriate national awards. Achievement rates of external awards are excellent at 100%. Distance travelled is robustly tracked, monitored and recorded through individual learning plans and the Henshaws Achievement Levels (HALs). The overall achievement of HALs and subject targets is outstanding at 97% and 95% respectively. There has been a three-year incremental increase in the number of learners accessing and achieving travel proficiency tests in the mobility curriculum. There are no achievement gaps between different groups. Destinations for learners are good. In 2009, 18 of the 23 leavers achieved their long-term occupational goal and progressed to general FE colleges or work-based training. In June 2009, the student athletic team attended the regional Special Olympics in York and gained eight gold, ten silver and six bronze medals. In July 2009, students from the college won a team award for 'Best Presentation in the Young Enterprise' programme awarded through the North Yorkshire Business & Enterprise Partnership.

Quality of provision

How well is the college developing the arts and crafts vocational curriculum and its links with Henshaw's Arts and Crafts Centre in nearby Knaresborough? Significant progress

The vocational curriculum is progressing very well. The arts and crafts vocational pathway has been available for two years now and there are 12 learners following this programme. In creating this pathway the college is effectively aiming to distinguish between learners who may be interested in art as therapy and those young people who are identified as having the skills to develop into artists and who may wish to develop their skills into employment. Learners may undertake two vocational pathways and this allows for synergies to be developed between them; for example, the use of photography in media and arts and crafts. Funding has also recently been awarded for an information and communication technology (ICT) capital project that will provide further opportunities for working across pathways. The arts and crafts centre in Knaresborough provides excellent access to good quality, realistic work environments in catering, hospitality and arts and crafts. Access to workshops at the centre also provides learners with good opportunities to work alongside working artists. The arts and crafts curriculum team has worked hard to successfully revise the curriculum. Schemes of work clearly demonstrate progression opportunities with significant improvements in the monitoring of subject targets. The standard of wall displays in the art rooms and around the college is inspirational and staff have high expectations of the learners and they are

very proud of their work.

How well has the college developed its learner involvement strategy? Significant progress

The college has a comprehensive learner involvement strategy. This includes clear aims, responsibilities and an analysis of learner involvement to date. The strategy is produced in a student friendly format to ensure it is fully accessible. Learners' views are regularly collected and successfully used to bring about improvements throughout the college; for example, through surveys and decisions made by the active student council. The council meetings are well recorded and outcomes clearly fed back to other learners. Learners are supported to self-advocate, or receive support through advocacy, to make decisions for themselves in various forums including tutorials and student reviews. All learners took part in a survey about what makes an outstanding lesson and the results were successfully fed back to the teaching staff via a best practice workshop. Development of the expert learner concept in some curriculum areas, such as mobility, has resulted in five learners becoming peer assessors through the expert traveller initiative. Learners are fully involved in the college's decision-making processes such as the health and safety committee, improving teaching and learning and helping new learners settle into college life through peer mentoring.

Leadership and management

How effectively does the provider monitor the effectiveness of its arrangements to promote health and safety? Significant progress

Arrangements to monitor the effectiveness of procedures to promote health and safety are very good. The single central vetting and recruitment record is complete and rigorously monitored. Safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive. All staff have had basic on-line safeguarding training for children and vulnerable adults. Good records are kept of staff training activities. Identified staff undertake enhanced training where appropriate; for example, in safe recruitment. The college works closely with the local safeguarding board. Reporting of incidents to appropriate authorities is effective. Staying and feeling safe are successfully promoted through personal and social education and the well structured tutorial system; learners report that they feel safe. Staff and learners pay very good attention to internet and e-safety. The appointment of the health and safety officer has had a significant and positive impact on the quality of arrangements for health and safety. The college's health and safety committee now meets termly and there is very good attention given to the views of learners. There is a learner representative on the committee. The safe learner concept is now very well embedded and monitored through specific health and safety targets. Risk assessments are rigorous and are regularly reviewed.

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