

Loppington 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

Loppington College is a residential independent specialist college situated in the rural North Shropshire countryside. In 2007 the provision became privately owned by Active Care Partnerships Limited, a specialist division of Southern Cross Health Care. The college provides further education for 12 learners aged 19-25 years, all of whom have severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities and communication delay.

Loppington House is a separate residential adult provision on the same site. Within the college ten learners are funded by the Learning and Skills Council and two are funded by Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) Welsh Assembly Government. Three learners attend daily.

The college was inspected in March 2008 and was judged to be satisfactory overall. Within the past six months the college has experienced a period of radical change. A new principal and acting vice-principal have been in post for one term; most of the senior management team are new to their role. The education advisory group is being re-evaluated to better define their roles and responsibilities. The college's mission is 'striving for independence in life work and leisure'. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How much progress have managers made in developing quality improvement arrangements, planning and self-assessment?

Reasonable
progress

The significant management restructure has provided a greater coherence across multi-disciplinary staff teams. Realistic and ambitious key performance indicators have been established. Comprehensive quality improvement action plans are rigorously monitored. Management information systems are being used well to monitor learners' rates of progress against agreed targets. Assessment, planning and review processes have been recently improved to ensure the outcomes are effective and the evidence base is more robust. The confidence and expertise of teaching staff is improving but the college is aware of the need for further development in this area. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and sufficiently involves all staff. Teachers complete a quality log to review and evaluate provision each term. The outcomes are used successfully to inform future planning and the self-assessment process. An extensive refurbishment programme is bringing about improvements to the college accommodation. Although initial indications are good, many of these developments have only recently been implemented and it is too early to fully evaluate their overall effectiveness.

Outcomes for learners

How well is Loppington College continuing to improve outcomes for learners since the last visit? Reasonable progress

The college has made reasonable progress in narrowing the achievement gap of learners. The framework for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) continues to be well applied. There is high expectation of all learners to achieve and be successful. The link between residential and day provision is much stronger and ensures a more holistic approach to independence skills development. Person-centred planning is being applied to learning and care plans in order to further promote learners self-advocacy skills. Robust monitoring of the quality of target setting is bringing about improvement and successfully identifying where further work needs to be done. Short-term targets are more precise and outcomes are being used effectively to measure progress. Targets are now shared across the residential and day provision and this is enabling learners to make progress at a faster pace. The curriculum has recently been reviewed and provides a coherent framework on which to base the rigorous and more focussed individual targets. Access to national awards is very limited but plans are in place to improve this for the future. Although a third of the leavers were registered for an award there was no qualification achievement in 2008-09. Session planning is detailed and comprehensive providing good opportunities for learners to assess their own progress. Destination data for last year indicate that 83% moved into supported living and 50% of these learners are now accessing further education courses.

Quality of provision

How well has Loppington College developed its learner involvement strategy including the progress made in gathering the views of learners to improve provision? Reasonable progress

Whilst there has been much improvement in the colleges approach to involving learners, a clear strategy with specific action planning has yet to be formalised. Learner views are regularly sought and acted upon through a variety of methods such as the student council, improved tutorials and the use of surveys which have been produced in a variety of formats. The college intends to involve learners in representation on college committees such as health and safety. Learners are invited to participate in recruitment processes to enable them to contribute to staff appointments. As a result of consultation with learners, the college has improved opportunities for learning through real activities in the community such as work experience and use of the college shop (SPACE) in Ellesmere. The college has also recently improved access to audio-visual equipment, provided broadband in the residential provision, increased space for leisure activities within the college, widened the choice of meals and is implementing a refurbishment programme in both the educational and residential accommodation.

Leadership and management

How effectively does Loppington College monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding measures?

Insufficient progress

Whilst the college is rigorous in its application of criminal record bureau checks (CRB) for all staff, managers have not yet established a single central vetting and recruitment record as expected. A range of recruitment information is available but it is not set out in a coherent format which would enable senior managers and the advisory board to regularly monitor its contents and identify any gaps. Safeguarding training is given high priority and by the end of February 2010 all staff will have received training in this area. Induction processes include good attention to health, safety and safeguarding issues. The necessary policies are in place and are regularly reviewed. Incidents, accidents and complaints are appropriately analysed and outcomes acted upon as necessary. Risk-assessment processes are 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 person on the advisory board with responsibility for safeguarding.

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