

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



12 April 2017

Mrs June Murray
Principal
RNIB College Loughborough
Radmoor Road
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE11 3BS

Dear Mrs Murray

Short inspection of RNIB College Loughborough

Following the short inspection on 15–16 March 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in November 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

Leaders and managers continue to provide a good educational experience for students at RNIB College Loughborough. You have managed the changes in legislation and funding arrangements well, developing good working relationships with the local authorities that commission places for students. Students respond very positively to the high expectations your staff have of them by developing realistic and ambitious plans for their futures. Students make at least good progress as a result of a well-managed, personalised curriculum that has a strong emphasis on preparing students for adult life.

You have made good progress in overcoming the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Your staff now have a stronger focus on learning and development in their sessions. Leaders and managers have simplified the recording and reviewing of progress and achievement, and increased the emphasis on identifying the impact of teaching and learning on individual students. Generally, that is successful. Your lesson observation process is now stronger and more rigorous and has resulted in improving the quality of teaching and learning across the college.

Although you have made good progress in improving the learning experience for students, your effectiveness in using the data you collect to support your self-assessment judgements and in providing governors with sufficient information to help them scrutinise the work of the college requires further development. In a few areas, the recording of progress and subsequent setting of appropriately challenging targets are not specific or clearly related to an individual's needs or long-term goals.

Safeguarding is effective.

Managers have been successful in creating a safe working environment and promoting a positive culture around personal awareness and well-being. This has resulted in students feeling safe and working safely, including in work-related settings. Students' individual risk assessments are appropriately personalised and comprehensive. The number of accidents is low and they are relatively minor. Behaviour management and monitoring are good. College data shows that incidents of challenging behaviour have reduced significantly through the year and are low.

All staff are trained appropriately in safeguarding and receive annual refresher training. Refresher training for staff and governors on the Mental Capacity Act 2005, including Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, is due for completion in the summer term.

Managers have implemented the 'Prevent' duty very well. They have effectively instigated a carefully considered plan to monitor the impact of actions taken and of staff training. Through tutorials and induction, students gain a good awareness of the potential dangers of social media, including how to be vigilant about those who hold extremist beliefs. Staff promote fundamental British values effectively and ensure that they are presented in accessible ways so that all students, including those with lower cognitive ability, can comprehend the information easily. For example, the rule of law, democracy, liberty and respect are integral to the 'golden rules', a set of well-promoted college values that are negotiated with students for all college staff and students to abide by. Students' behaviour around the college and in lessons is reflective of these values.

Inspection findings

- You continue to nurture a culture of higher expectations among staff. Leaders and managers have successfully maintained the many strengths outlined at the previous inspection. Managers continue to use most information and data well to monitor the quality of provision at the college and steadily improve the areas for development. For example, managers now audit the quality of students' progress files far more rigorously and this has led to a clearer process of target setting and recording targets – and more personalised and ambitious long-term goals for students.

- Senior managers have revised their data 'dashboard', which in turn has aided governors in gaining a condensed view of progress against key areas of the college's work. In order for governors to assure themselves of the progress made against key priorities, they have also taken additional steps to test out findings through their own first-hand discussions with parents, students and staff. While the 'dashboard' provides governors with a wide array of pertinent information, it does not provide sufficient insight into a few key areas of the college's work that would enable them to ask more searching questions of managers. For example, leaders' monitoring of how well students' destinations are sustained is not systematically reported through self-assessment or to the governing body. In addition, managers place too much emphasis on an observation grade profile as a standalone measure of improvement in teaching, learning and assessment.
- College data shows that managers monitor the performance of different groups of students appropriately, and take relevant action where they identify any notable variation in achievement. Managers recognise that their analysis needs to be more comprehensive, including greater focus on some trends over time and the inclusion of all groups, such as those eligible for free school meals.
- Managers are mostly accurate in their identification of key strengths and weaknesses within the self-assessment report. However, while they outline areas for development, these are not specific enough. As a result, the rate of progress within a few areas has not been as rapid as managers would like.
- Students continue to receive effective teaching that helps them make positive overall progress towards their long-term goals. Weekly 'spotlight' training sessions enable staff to review findings from observations as well as share good practice on classroom-based learning and on assessment. Consequently, staff have applied the feedback to ensure that students are now more involved in negotiating their own targets than previously.
- In most cases, teachers' management of learning support is strong and helps extend the progress students make in lessons. In the best examples, teachers plan and adapt very well to ensure that activities are ambitious, provide real-life context and build effectively on the transferable work skills that students need to support their future independence.
- Managers monitor the quality of lessons more frequently through a range of observations and developmental mentoring on an individual basis. While teaching and learning remain good overall, managers' feedback through observations and appraisals is not precise enough to enable all staff to improve their teaching practice even further.
- College leaders and managers recognise that the information provided in education, health and care plans is of variable quality and in most cases does not provide appropriate and up-to-date detail to enable staff to identify starting points and set realistic and challenging targets. The college-devised assessments are accurate and effective in identifying students' starting points. You make good and effective use of your specialist staff, including the visual impairment specialist, speech and language therapist and physiotherapist, to identify students' strengths and key areas for development.

- Overall, therapists make an at least good contribution to the learning experience. For example, the physiotherapist uses detailed assessment to provide clear practical guidance for teachers and learning assistants on how best to work with students to improve their mobility, coordination, and fine and gross motor skills.
- Since the previous inspection, targets are personalised and link more closely to long-term goals and aspirations. The routine recording of progress requires further development – for example, in a minority of cases, the summary recording of personal effectiveness targets fails to identify the progress made or standards reached. For instance, some students' progress was recorded as 'having developed their skills to make healthy choices' or 'were working on taking part in physical activities'. These statements did not place the achievement of targets in a relevant context or provide a means to plan additional developmental targets.
- Most work placements are good and provide a realistic work environment. Placements help students develop a range of personal and work-related skills. Learning assistants provide appropriate support, knowing when to intervene or guide and when to observe. Students are proud of their work placements and respond well to the challenges they face. Learning targets in work placements are not specifically work related or in some cases personalised. Although a very simple job description and person specification are produced, these lack sufficient detail to help students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in terms of skills, tasks and the standards associated with job roles.
- Teachers continue to reinforce English and mathematics skills very effectively in practical situations, using varied and stimulating approaches. The assessment of students' starting points in English and mathematics is versatile, accurate and appropriate. Most relevant activities support English and mathematics development well. Activities that prepare students for work are particularly strong – for example, during numeracy sessions, students preparing to work in the college shop or café use real money, stock and the tills they will be working on. However, some whole-group activities are not sufficiently personalised and active to stimulate and motivate the most-able students or those with very complex needs.
- Partnership working with employers is very successful in increasing the work placement opportunities and employment options for students. For example, the manager of a local fast-food chain of restaurants is helping college staff to make links with another branch closer to a student's home, increasing the likelihood of paid employment when the student leaves college. Another major local employer has expressed interest in joining the governing body.
- The recently introduced supported internship programme currently has four interns with three employers. College leaders acknowledge that progress in this area is not as good as they had hoped, as there are students who would benefit from a supported internship who do not have a suitable employer available. Your transitions team now starts to work earlier with students and their parents, encouraging them to think about their future options and how the college can help prepare them for adult life.

- Managers' recording of destinations is comprehensive, providing good detail about the range of activities students undertake when they leave college, as well as their accommodation arrangements. Overall, the vast majority of students achieve their long-term aims. Half of the 18 leavers in 2016 progressed into paid voluntary work or supported internships, with other students progressing on to other further or higher education qualifications or community activities. The use of local labour market information by the transitions team is good. They successfully identify suitable supportive employers and encourage them to work with the college.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- areas identified for development within the self-assessment report are incisive and appropriately prioritised, so that managers can focus on the areas that will have the greatest impact on the lives of students
- managers monitor the sustainability of students' destinations and the achievement of different groups with greater rigour, enabling leaders and governors better to review trends and use the information to improve further the provision and students' outcomes
- work experience targets are more closely linked to the occupations undertaken and the standards expected, so that students and their learning assistants are clear about what teachers expect of them and how this will improve students' future employment prospects
- all learning targets fully support the identified needs and long-term goals of each student, making sure that evidence to support the progress towards targets is evaluative and, where appropriate, identifies the skills developed and standards achieved.

I am copying this letter to the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors visited the college for two days. We carried out inspection activities across both the college sites. Your programme leader learner progress assisted inspectors. We met with you, governors, curriculum managers and therapists, and with a range of teachers, learning assistants and students. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment, and internal and external work placements.