

IAG Gold Standard assessment – Whitgift School, Grimsby

External Assessment carried out on 12th July 2010

Assessor – Vince Barrett

In attendance – Paula Shaw, Curriculum Adviser

Overview

Whitgift School is a smaller than average mixed 11-16 secondary school, located to the west of Grimsby in North East Lincolnshire and serving the Willows Estate - an area of mixed council and private housing with a wide range of socio-economic circumstances. Learner numbers have fallen in recent years and there are currently 760 learners on roll; virtually all are White British and live within walking distance of the school. Attainment on entry to the school is below the national average and the percentage of learners with a statement of special educational need or with a learning difficulty or disability (LDD) is higher than national averages. Free school meal entitlement is also above average. The school site comprises a range of buildings constructed principally in the 1960s and 70s with a more recent humanities wing opened in 1999. Unusually for a school of this size, facilities are extensive and include a sports hall, two swimming pools, a dance studio, theatre and cinema the last two of which are community facilities open to the public.

This school recognises that high quality information, advice and guidance (IAG) are important factors in ensuring the well-being and progress of learners and has organised its pastoral system into three 'colleges' - Brunel, Stephenson and Telford.

At the time of this assessment, the future of Whitgift School was under review and a number of options being considered, including the creation of a 3-19 'through school' or the formation of a partnership with another secondary school, to re-open as a new academy. Consequently, the school is in a transition phase but this IAG assessment has been made on the basis of Whitgift School operating as a maintained 11-16 secondary school.

Assessment

Prior to the formal assessment, Paula Shaw, Connexions Curriculum Adviser for North East Lincolnshire, worked closely with key personnel in the school assisting in the compilation of the self-assessment form in preparation for external assessment. A portfolio of evidence containing documented IAG policy and practice was provided to the assessor prior to the date of assessment and a planned programme for assessment prepared. During the course of the assessment, I interviewed Mark Rushby (Headteacher); Dave Mills and Andy Carrington (Assistant Headteachers); Lee Whitehead (Co-ordinator of Enterprise, Career and Work-Related Learning); Kay Niven (Leader, Admin Support); Christine Miles and Dawn Wardle (Admin Support); Amanda Oliver (Guidance Counsellor); Janice Rimmer (Intervention Strategy Manager/SENCO) and young people randomly selected during the course of the assessment.

The assessment procedure took a full day. In addition to the interviews defined above, a visual inspection of the available facilities for provision of information, advice and guidance was carried out and all interviews and observations were later cross-referenced against the portfolio of paper evidence pre-submitted by the school. This, and additional evidence collected during the assessment demonstrate each Element and Component of the North East Lincolnshire Gold Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance as described in summary below:

Element 1 – Accessible and Visible resources

Component 1: There will be one or more information areas, open at clearly displayed times, accessible to all learners and providing a range of appropriate, current and impartial information which meets all needs

There is a centrally located Learner Zone, comprising 17 computer stations and access to hard copy information on a range of topics of interest to teenagers. There is a large social area where during lunchtimes, all Whitgift learners may socialise, obtain food, play pool, browse the internet or simply chat. There is also a quiet anteroom containing current information sheets and posters and learners use this room for individual reading and research. Prospectuses for all local post-16 providers are freely available to all learners. The Zone is popular and well used.

I talked with a number of Year 10 learners about how they received information, advice and guidance. All knew about www.lincs2.co.uk, were starting to complete their profiles and were aware of how to contact the Connexions Personal Adviser. All knew about the day-to-day help available from the Student Support Centre (See Element 2.1).

Component 2: All staff involved in providing information will be familiar with its content and purpose

The Headteacher, College Leaders, tutors and key external IAG staff are aware of the range and content of the information available in the Zone, direct learners to use the facilities there and offer support in gaining information appropriate to their needs.

Assistant Headteacher Andy Carrington, who has responsibility for IAG provision, attends relevant training and local authority briefings which are disseminated to IAG practitioners in school by way of tutor meetings and in-house training sessions. The in-house College Leaders work together to ensure that quality and consistency is maintained in terms of pastoral support and delivery of information, advice and guidance.

Element 2 – Accessible Advice and Guidance

Component 1: Internal and external advice and guidance practitioners will collectively possess the necessary skills, knowledge, training and qualifications to identify and respond to each learner's needs.

There is a centrally-located advice and guidance team which operates from the Student Support Centre in Room W6. This facility is known to staff and learners alike as simply 'W6'. The team comprises Kay Niven (Leader, Admin Support); Christine Miles and Dawn Wardle (Admin Support). Based in the same corridor are Janice Rimmer (Intervention Strategy Manager/ SENCO), Amanda Oliver and Tanya Gardener (Guidance Counsellors). There is a team approach to dealing with day-to-day learner concerns and queries. Learners can drop in to W6 for help with any aspect of personal or school life and a member of the team will, depending on the issue, either deal with it immediately or make arrangements for it to be resolved at a later date either by themselves or a specialist. The W6 team members have regular training and updating sessions to ensure that all are familiar with changing legislation and protocols.

There is a strong multi-agency approach in the school and the W6 team have contact with a list of 43 external agencies and professionals e.g. Connexions, social, health and youth services. In order to ensure that learners receive whatever support they need. All IAG personnel have received training on child protection procedures and statutory Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) safeguarding checks are in place. In discussion, learners report that they value the individual help available to them via W6 and feel that team members are approachable and non-judgemental.

The Connexions PA (Careers) is available to complement the work of the school's IAG team and referrals for careers interviews are timely and appropriate.

Component 2: Advice and guidance practitioners will know about the work of other IAG providers who may be better placed to meet learners' needs

Communication between the external and internal agencies described in Element 2.1 is excellent due to regular meetings and the well-structured organisation of the pastoral team; these provide a strong basis for partnership working. Internal college leaders and tutors work in tandem with the W6 team and a co-ordinated referral system to external IAG providers as appropriate is in operation.

Careers interviews are offered to learners during the latter part of Year 10 and throughout Year 11. Learners may also self-refer at any time and the availability of the Connexions PA is well advertised. There are also regular pastoral and academic team meetings which can involve attendance by external IAG practitioners.

Element 3 – Linked IAG Provision

Component 1: The provision of linked IAG will be part of the remit of a senior manager within the organisation or service

Assistant Headteacher Andy Carrington is responsible for information, advice and guidance systems within the school and works as a member of the Senior Leadership Team to ensure that IAG provision is given a high priority. Learners report that the mixed-age vertical tutoring system has helped them to get to know people in other year cohorts which they say has been beneficial in addressing issues such as bullying. Isolated incidences of bullying are dealt with speedily and effectively. The school has a family ethos and provides a supportive caring atmosphere learners.

Component 2: Practitioners will make clear to learners the links between IAG services and where necessary support learners in their transition between these services

In addition to communication channels described in Element 2.2 above, there is an effective and supportive support system that is able to respond quickly and appropriately to learners' needs. In addition to the W6 team, the school's matron, Wendy Brown, is available to learners and staff throughout each day to ensure immediate attention and/or referral to other health agencies. All school pastoral staff are familiar with the work of the agencies available to support young people and the three college leaders take responsibility for the co-ordination of all personal, educational and vocational education and guidance.

The school has in place a clear 'Behaviour for Learning' system for the reporting of incidents or concerns and to address the management of low-level disruptive behaviour. This is a five-phase procedure starting with verbal and recorded warnings. At phase 3,

teachers can refer learners to a specified withdrawal room. Phase 4 may involve referral to the headteacher and phase 5 is total isolation from school life and the possibility of fixed term exclusion. All issues and actions taken are logged and stored centrally. This whole-school approach ensures patterns of behaviour and recurring issues are identified, action taken and referrals to appropriate agencies made whenever necessary. All staff and learners consulted were clear about these procedures.

The Connexions service draws up an annual Partnership Agreement with the school where appropriate allocations of PA time agreed and links with other agencies defined. This process serves to evaluate and review the provision offered by Connexions within the school.

Component 3: Practitioners will recognise professional boundaries and know which alternative provision is appropriate for signposting or referral to meet each learner's guidance needs

Internal and external IAG practitioners working in the school come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. All are aware of the remit of others and referrals are made easily between IAG personnel in order to ensure that specific questions on topics such as finance, health, accommodation or transition are addressed by the most appropriate internal or external practitioner. All learners are issued with a 'Student Passport' which contain summaries of the schools key policies and where learners may record their achievements and credits they have earned.

Element 4. Quality and Delivery of IAG

Component 1: IAG will be targeted at the needs of learners and informed by social and economic priorities at local regional and national levels

As stated in the overview to this report, the school is situated in area of mixed social and economic backgrounds which means that it serves a learner population that is truly comprehensive and so has to cater for a wide range of support needs. Consequently, there are in place very clear policies and protocols for anti-bullying; child protection; safeguarding; presentation of self and work; teaching for learning; special educational needs and disability. These help to ensure identification of those learners requiring additional support and to ensure that their academic, social or personal guidance needs are met. The school has developed strong links with a wide range of external support and guidance practitioners (see Element 2.1) and health professionals, educational psychologists, educational welfare officers and children's services are deployed in order to help meet specific needs. There are good links with home and evidence shows that parents are very appreciative of the learner support offered by the school.

Component 2: A planned personal development programme based upon DfES/DCSF national recommendations will underpin IAG

There is a programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship delivered in curriculum time for years 7-11. The content is regularly audited to ensure topicality and consistency. There is also on offer a wide variety of visits, visitors, lunchtime and after school clubs and activities that broaden learners' experiences.

The school's 'college' pastoral system tutorial programme complements the taught PSHCE curriculum and contributes to learners' personal development. There is also a personalised careers education programme and full participation in work experience which ensure that learners are well prepared to enter the next stage of education, training or working life.

Element 5. Diversity of IAG Provision

Component 1: IAG provision will recognise and reflect the diversity of learners' needs and promote equality of opportunity and access

As indicated elsewhere, the school serves a wide range of learners and there is a monitoring system in place to track all learners' progress. Systems for supporting vulnerable learners are established and there are excellent links with outside agencies and medical professionals. Specialist provision for learners with any difficulties or disabilities is provided via the SENCO and the SEN Team which offer excellent support for those who, for whatever reason, are unable to fully engage with learning in the classroom.

Whitgift has a very small number of learners from other cultures and in its 2008 inspection report Ofsted expressed the view that *"Students' understanding of the diversity reflected in multicultural Britain today is underdeveloped."* This has been addressed via a revision of the PSHCE syllabus and the formation of an International Club to increase learners' understanding of world cultures.

Component 2: IAG will be available in other more neutral premises whenever appropriate

Learners are aware of the Connexions Centre in Grimsby and some have used this facility. Off-site consultation with other specialised practitioners (educational psychologist, health professionals etc) is arranged as required.

Element 6. Impartiality of IAG Provision

Component 1: IAG will promote equally all options available and open to learners based on the defined needs and circumstances of each individual to ensure as far as possible, accurate matching of stated need to help and support

Learners are offered a wealth of opportunities to gather further learning or training information without bias. This is achieved through the careers education programme and by complementary activities such as the annual careers fair, use of the local 'i4u' Student Planner, open access to the Area Prospectus www.lincs2.co.uk and use of the inbuilt Common Application Process (CAP). All staff working with learners using the CAP are aware of how to use the website and Liz Wild, local authority's E-Manager, has offered further training for staff when this is required. Learners report that they told me are supported in preparing to send applications via the CAP.

As the school is situated close to Grimsby, the most popular options post-16 are into full time college provision at either Grimsby Institute for vocational courses or to Franklin College for academic course choices. A relatively small proportion choose to go on to apprenticeships although this number increased in 2010 due to progression from the Engineering Diploma.

Component 2: IAG will support learners in making informed decisions and will not favour any particular learner or groups of learners in order to address institutional targets or goals

As an 11-16 school, Whitgift has no vested interest in promoting any post-16 learning opportunity. Learners are given open access to all information about the full range of provision available and all learners in Key Stage 4 can have confidential and impartial careers interviews. The two local colleges and work-based learning providers are welcomed into school and the Area Wide Prospectus (www.lincs2.co.uk) is available to all. Year 10 learners interviewed during the day were becoming aware of available opportunities.

Element 7 – IAG for Learning and Work

Component 1: IAG for learning and work will support learners in exploring the implications of possible career choices when planning their futures

The school offers a number of resources and activities that learners are encouraged to access which relate to further learning and work. The careers programme explores the implications of learning, training and occupational choices and the Connexions PA offers individual advice and guidance on selecting appropriate next destinations. All learners in Year 10 have an entitlement to a work experience placement that is suited to their needs. Relevant staff are consulted e.g. tutors, SENCO or College Leaders to ensure that the right match of learner and provider is found. Learners undergo a series of activities and lessons to prepare them and are given clear guidelines about what they should expect and what will be expected of them before they will be sent out on a placement.

Component 2: IAG practitioners with a careers focus will work closely with local employers to ascertain up-to-date LMI.

The Connexions PA works with learners to ensure they understand the local and national labour market and the school works with the Humber EBP to ensure that all receive work-related experience as a part of the curriculum. Learners are able to access the local website (www.lmihumber.co.uk) to obtain up-to-date information.

The school has been a partner in delivery of the Engineering Diploma at Foundation and Higher levels since 2008 and this has led to enhanced links with local engineering companies. In 2009, all Engineering Diploma learners successfully progressed on to Apprenticeships with local employers.

Component 3: IAG provision will ensure that all learners have access to a common 14-19 prospectus from the end of key stage 3 in order that they are made aware of opportunities and qualification requirements for study and training from the age of 14 and for further study, training or employment from the age of 16.

As mentioned in Element 6.2, all learners are encouraged to seek course information and make applications via the Lincs 2 North East Lincolnshire Area Prospectus (www.lincs2.co.uk). and a high percentage of 2009 leavers made their applications using the system.

Element 8 – IAG responsiveness to the needs of clients

Component 1: IAG practitioners will liaise with each other and all external agencies and services that provide support for learners

School procedures for agency liaison are clear and these include stated protocols for information sharing, child protection, safeguarding and data protection. Staff delivering the all-age vertical tutorial programme ensure that material is suitable for all learners and have regular meetings both formally and informally with each other and outside agencies. All learners are made aware of how to access information, advice and guidance in the school and all interviewed were quite clear about who to see for different IAG needs. The W6 team, matron and other non-teaching staff provide very good non-judgmental 'listening ears' for learners when they need talk through sensitive issues.

Component 2: IAG provision will ensure that available information is acknowledged and incorporated into advice and guidance sessions

All significant IAG interventions are logged in tutorial learner records and the Connexions PA also maintains learner guidance information in the CCIS Trakrekord database. All

information held on learners is securely held and shared within current data protection legislation between practitioners to ensure the most effective support is provided.

Element 9 – Evaluation of IAG

Component 1: All IAG practitioners and learners are able to feed back their views on the provision within the organisation

Whitgift School encourages an ethos of pride in being a member of the school and enjoyment of the facilities and experiences it offers. All learners interviewed during this assessment said they feel safe, are happy to be at the school and most feel able to feed back on aspects of school life, including access to information advice and guidance, individually and through the College and tutorial systems. There is a strong School Council through which learners can feed back their views on any aspect of the organisation. Several reported that they feel their views are listened to and acted upon.

Recommendation

It is clear that the provision of high quality information, advice and guidance has gained a higher profile in Whitgift School through working towards the requirements for this Award. Paula Shaw, North East Lincolnshire's Curriculum Adviser worked very closely with the school over a period of several months in order to ensure that all protocols, policies procedures and facilities are in place and operating.

However, as stated in the overview to this report, Whitgift School is in the process of evaluating its position in the North East Lincolnshire learning community and is considering the possible impact of the new coalition government's education policies. This report describes the procedures the school currently (December 2010) has in place to provide good quality IAG for its learners and a re-assessment would need to be carried out should the school change its status or organisation.

That said, having spent a full day in the school, interviewing, questioning and observing - in addition to consideration of the comprehensive portfolio of submitted paper evidence supporting the quality of IAG, I recommend that Whitgift School should be awarded the North East Lincolnshire Gold Standard Award for IAG.

Vince Barrett
Connexions Humber Gold Standard Assessor
4th December 2010

Date for re-assessment: July 2013 (see recommendation above)