

Self-Assessment Report: Academic Year 2023/24



Introduction

The College self-assessment process was revised this year requiring each pathway to write a self-assessment report. These reports have focussed on identifying the key strengths and areas that need development, including how wider college services, such as Learning Support Assistant (LSA) support and therapies, help them to deliver an effective curriculum. This has led to a more collaborative approach and greater assurance that judgements are robust. Nuneaton staff have fed into individual pathway reports to reduce silo approaches and ensure we have a holistic view.

The individual reports have been subject to their own validation process and form the basis of the overall college self-assessment report (SAR). Business support areas have been included within the overall college SAR and have not been expected to produce department reports.

This report is an opportunity to reflect on the year and thank all our staff for their commitment towards our students. This SAR has been endorsed by the Board of Trustees and is available on the Homefield website.

Homefield College: Who we are.

We are a specialist Further Education college providing person-centred community-based learning for young adults (16-25) who have learning and / or communication disabilities.

We operate from multiple sites within villages (Mountsorrel, Sileby & Barrow-upon-Soar) & towns (Nuneaton) in Leicestershire & Warwickshire so that students can play a key part in our local communities and develop a sense of self in society.

As part of this work, we run two public-facing enterprises – Breward's Coffee Shop focuses on hospitality & catering whilst Spectrum Style is an autism-friendly hair, grooming & beauty training salon.

Our study programmes are designed to prepare students for adulthood by helping them become active citizens – and where possible, employees. We also offer Bespoke Provision for young people who have become disengaged with education, requiring a highly individualised transition, and run a small number of supported internships supporting students into work.



We provide a wide range of vocational learning, including:

- Art & Craft
- Catering & Hospitality
- Digital Media / ICT
- Hair, Grooming & Beauty
- Horticulture
- Performing Arts
- Small Animal Care
- Sport & Fitness
- Woodwork

To enhance our curriculum offer we also work with three subcontractors. We partner with T.E.C.K (motor vehicle) and Enstruct (environmental construction & woodland) to enhance vocational provision, with students benefitting by learning from these organisations' industry-specialist instructors.

In addition, we operate the 'No Limits' programme with MacIntyre Care who provide individualised programmes for students with complex needs in order that they may access the main college at a point during their study programme.

In 23/24, 167 students were enrolled at the College funded by the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), which is an increase of 18% from 22/23. Over three quarters of our students are male and whilst most are aged 19+. 16–18-year-old numbers are growing and now represent 40% of students.

We also operate a small day service provision based within the community at equally high standards. This provision is not funded by the ESFA so is not the subject of this report.

Ofsted and effectiveness of the college

In June 2024 Ofsted completed our second short inspection. They judged the College to remain a good provider highlighting several strengths and areas that could be improved. These correlate closely with what we identified ourselves throughout the year and during the self-assessment process.

Key positives included:

- ✓ Teaching, support and therapy staff work together successfully to create a calm and productive learning environment.
- ✓ Leaders ensure that students complete valuable activities to develop their personal and life skills.
- ✓ Students learn helpful information about healthy relationships, how to keep themselves safe and wellbeing.
- ✓ Each student's course is appropriately adapted to meet their individual needs and EHCP.
- ✓ Teachers and support staff are suitably qualified and experienced to carry out their roles.
- ✓ Leaders have a strong focus on improving what they do.

Most significantly the report highlights three key areas that need to be improved:

- Ensure that staff review and systematically set student targets so that future targets are clear and students' progress can be monitored fully.
- Support teachers to contextualise mathematics in their lessons appropriately so students better develop their understanding of this subject.
- Ensure that the revised quality and observation processes provide clear areas for development so that the quality of education continues to improve.

Progress against 23/24 Quality Improvement Plan

During 23/24, progress has been made against the areas for development identified in the 22/23 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP):

- ✓ Development of Pathway 1 functional skills and use of milestones to support pre-entry progression. A clear process has been implemented to ensure stretching targets to move students from working towards to undertake qualifications.
- ✓ Monitoring of subcontractor key performance data to improve outcomes / attendance.
- ✓ Development of Continuous Professional Learning (CPL).

Whilst significant progress has been made against several of the priorities set for 23/24, there remains several areas where progress is slow. These include:

- Creation of an ambitious curriculum for Pathway 2 and Pathway 3.
- Development of the impact of lunch clubs and enrichment opportunities.
- Development of consistent and effective assessment and feedback.
- Improvement to evidence recording of quality measures that is focused and rapid enough for in-year impact.
- Improvement to & development of effective student voice mechanisms.
- Development of an effective Digital Strategy.
- Maximisation of the benefit of Trustees' input and ensuring that they are confident about the quality of services.

In addition to the above, the format for presenting and monitoring progress against the QIP actions is cumbersome meaning that tracking and leadership oversight has lacked clarity. It has not always allowed leaders to quickly identify areas that are making slow progress to provide the required additional challenge or support. It is also fair to say that progress has been limited this year due to the impact of the Curriculum Managers' absence and student progress difficulties.

Despite some significant challenges in 23/24, we continue to be a **good** college.

Overall achievement (which includes RARPA) has dropped 3% in 23/24 to 90%, predominantly due to the fall in English and maths functional skills achievement.

Achievement at Nuneaton is 82.9% the lowest in college due to lower retention and the withdrawal of students (3 in 23/24 and 1 in 22/23 all of whom impacted achievement) with multiple aims.

Qualification achievement rate overall (excluding RARPA) is 86% down by 7%.

Female students achieve slightly less well overall, due to lower functional skills maths achievement (all in their final year at college so cannot continue into 24/25).

There is **no variation in Looked After Children (LAC) achievement**, however students on **Free School Meals achieve less well** (7% lower) mainly as a result of higher withdrawals and legacy qualification aims.

Students taking **vocational qualifications** generally achieve very well. Only two did not have 100% pass rate (2 students did not achieve on both the arts award and food safety). It has been identified that a key issue with the food safety exam is that it is not accessible for SEND students. This will now be explored with the awarding body and JCQ.

A smaller number of students have impacted negatively on the data multiple times, which gives a disproportionate view of some of the achievement rates.

English and maths achievement are explored in detail later in the report.

Pathway summaries have been taken from the individual self-assessment reports. These individual reports have been validated and the areas for development included in the revised QIP.

A wide range of data has been analysed to help inform the judgements reached in this report. A comprehensive set of data is provided for internal use in appendices including retention, achievement, progress and attendance.

Quality of Education

We have a **very clear vision for a curriculum** that empowers our students to be active citizens. Staff and partners understand this well and our curriculum is designed to ensure we are a person-centred community-based learning and education provider. Students benefit from a variety of learning environments across several sites and locations. Staff use these well to develop a curriculum that offers strong links and opportunities to have our communities at the heart of learning. Our vision and values consciously influence curriculum design and delivery; to enhance the student experience, raise awareness and promote community cohesion. *Some areas of the curriculum, most specifically Pathway 2 and Pathway 3, need development to further the vision we have for our curriculum intent.*

The **curriculum is carefully designed to be responsive to the needs and interests of students** and for the large majority this aligns well with their EHCP goals and personal ambitions. Managers developing the curriculum are also mindful of local volunteering and paid employment opportunities. Our curriculum offer is enhanced by the partnerships we have with a small number of carefully selected subcontractors that align with our values and ethos to support the development of students. It prepares students accordingly for adulthood and almost all students make good progress towards achieving their EHCP goals.

The **vocational learning opportunities** within the curriculum provide a positive starting point for our students to understand more about employment options. Two of the subcontractors enable access to specialist vocational learning (in motor vehicle, environmental studies and construction) and give students the opportunity to benefit from the extensive knowledge and experience of industry-specialist instructors. Consequently, they pass their qualifications and progress to positive destinations including, where appropriate, higher-level learning. The third subcontractor enables students who have significant complex needs to be able to access education and, where possible, prepare to join one of our own pathways.

The curriculum is intended to provide **progression routes**, including a small provision of supported internships (SI). Managers continuously review the curriculum for improvement and recognise the need to prepare students even more effectively for their intended destinations. The stated intent for SI and Pathway 3 is to support students to progress into work; too few achieve this ambition. *Greater planning is required through improved scaffolding and explicit links to intended destinations to ensure that more students achieve this outcome.*

A key focus within the curriculum is supporting students to **develop life skills and travel skills**. There has been some positive work in these areas during 23/24 as managers previously recognised the need to prepare students even more effectively for their intended destinations. This year they have made better use of facilities and resources, but this has not been as impactful as intended. *Further work is needed to ensure that students have equitable access to an effective and safe travel curriculum that fully meets their needs and empowers students towards more independent travel as quickly as possible.*

Managers have taken significant steps in-year to improve students' transition into college. Staff have improved the focus and effectiveness of transition activities through rewriting the policy/process and by working more collaboratively have made a tangible improvement to management oversight. This has had a positive impact in the latter part of 23/24 with ALL students attending at least one, and some multiple, college transitions activity. It is anticipated that this will create a more settled start for students in 24/25 as well as improved baseline and target setting. *There remains a need to start transition activities for students and parents much earlier and an ongoing need to encourage parents to engage more fully in the transition process.*

Tutors have extensive experience in teaching young people who have learning and / or communication needs. They use their knowledge well to plan lessons that students enjoy. Individualised resources, teaching, assessment and support ensures that most students make at least expected progress and achieve their goals. However, curriculum planning is not consistently linked to students' targets and some schemes of work (SOW) lack the specificity of what is being taught and how this meets students' current targets. This means that for some students, particularly on Pathway 2 and 3, the curriculum and the subsequent target setting does not enable them to progress as quickly as they could and not all of them reach their full potential.

The **introduction of Evidence for Learning (EFL) was intended to improve target setting and assessment** alongside providing more effective oversight of progress. In 23/4, this has been fraught with problems due to limited engagement of some staff in developing the frameworks and a lack of clarity in the target setting process. The issues came to a head mid-year when it was identified that the extent of student progress was unclear and not easy to quantify. This resulted in a set of remedial actions that in the short term gave managers and Trustees assurances that students were making progress. It has highlighted significant leadership and management issues in the lack of oversight, inconsistent use of EFL, ineffective quality assurance systems and poor use of data to identify issues early. The resulting quality assurance of assessment evidence is slowly having an impact; however it was overshadowed by the issues with EFL implementation during 23/24.

Maths, English and digital skills are generally embedded into the curriculum with emphasis on real life application – for example, teaching students to read and use public transport timetables. Speaking and listening skills are developed, and students are encouraged to express their wishes. Maths skills are improved when measuring materials in woodwork or handling money in our enterprises. *Within each pathway, students would benefit from more explicit development of English and maths including a consistent use of the technical language of the functional skills.*

During 23/24 managers have put in place **improved tracking of English and maths milestones** that has allowed staff to more thoroughly check that students are making progress. The data shows that 85% made progress in English and 88% in maths (33 students for English and 32 for maths). Alongside this, there has been a **positive uptake in the number of students taking functional skills exams**. This includes significant progress in supporting our subcontractors to deliver functional skills on site, leading to improved attendance and an increase in those taking their exams. This will only enhance their future employment opportunities and increase the chances of progressing to GFE or onto apprenticeships.

An increase in functional skills exams being taken was a key target for 23/24 in part to demonstrate a growing ambition for our students. It was recognised that this would have a negative impact on achievement rates. However previous achievement rates have been over inflated due to the culture of only entering students when they are fully ready. There is now a **three-year improving trend in the number of students taking functional skills exams**, from 45 in 21/22 to 91 in 23/24. Achievement has dropped from last year, 95% to 82%, which was anticipated and is as a result of the impact of legacy students / qualifications from 22/23 (5 fails are legacy). When removing legacy students, the achievement increases to 90%. *A key action for 24/25 will be to carefully monitor the achievement of students who are enrolled and take the exam in year against those who start in one and complete in a subsequent year.*

There is a difference between English achievement at 87% compared to maths at 78%, yet these compare favourably to national rates. Achievement at Level 1 is lower than pre-entry at 75% but

still 30% above national levels. Level 2 has the lowest achievement but is close to national levels. (Please note low numbers at Level 1 and Level 2 mean that statistical confidence will be lower).

There are still some challenges in identifying students who might be able achieve a functional skill. Too few of our students complete a detailed assessment of their starting points for English and maths. At present only students undertaking functional skills complete a robust diagnostic. *Whilst curriculum planning and teaching of discreet English and maths has begun to improve, this is not yet consistent or fully embedded and will be a priority for 24/25.*

Functional skills exams are taken throughout the year, and this will continue in 24/25. The revised SOW due to be introduced in 24/25 sets out clearer expectations for staff and students. For example, speaking and listening exams are planned for before Christmas allowing managers to monitor achievement in-year. This, along with the roll out of improved tracking of students' progress against the new SOW, will give managers a clear picture of English and maths progress throughout the year.

Almost all students stay in education and make significant progress towards achieving their goals. This is possible due to the extensive support offered by therapies, behaviour specialists and progress coaches. There is now a well-established collaborative approach to supporting students' learning as therapies are now fully integrated with curriculum. All students have access to therapeutic interventions and evidence-based practice is embedded within everyday working.

Learning support staff provide effective support for our students and contribute significantly to the quality of education. They know their students well and there is evidence that ongoing CPL is having a positive impact. As a result, they are more able to help students make progress and develop their independence. There remains an issue with how LSAs are directed by teaching staff and consequently LSAs' understanding of the targets that students are working towards. *Teaching staff need to develop their skills and confidence in directing LSAs to work on specific targets and gather more robust evidence of progress.* This will allow LSAs to be more focussed on how they support and the assessment evidence they record. *LSAs also need to be supported to work with a wider range of students and across a number of pathways,* both to develop their own practice but to ensure that we support our students to accept help and support from more people.

Progress Coaches offer effective personal support for students and carefully monitor their progress with close attention on meeting needs throughout a student's study programme. They encourage students to make meaningful decisions about their learning. Whilst 1-1 tutorials with students are well received, Progress Coaches do not always have easy access to the broad ranges of data that would allow them to more carefully monitor the progress that students make to more carefully focus discussions with students and tutors. Progress Coaches are not always included in progress reviews (MDTs) and communication with curriculum is not consistently good. *1-1s need to be more focussed and the central role that Progress Coaches play in driving student progress needs greater clarity across staff withing curriculum.*

The College continues to have high retention at 94.8%. The small number of students who do not complete their study programme are often due to significant health issues, challenges with care and support outside of college, or due to the need to safeguard students and staff. Staff put in every effort and make considerable adjustments to support these students and offer guidance on alternative opportunities where appropriate. Some students who withdraw are enrolled on more than one aim so impact retention multiple times.

Personal Development

Students make **significant personal progress in preparing for adulthood** and life as active citizens. Personal development is at the core of the curriculum with a number of key threads, enabling students to become more socially confident and resilient, mental and physical wellbeing, awareness of personal safety and the development of employability skills. Community integration is a key feature of the curriculum with many lessons embedded out in the community. This allows students the opportunities to learn in real life situations, such as accessing the local leisure centre, tennis courts and community centres. Students also support community events at a local church and undertake litter picking activities. As a result, they become more positive and active citizens.

Focus is given to **improving the physical and mental wellbeing** of students. We continue to incorporate the Daily Mile into the curriculum recognising the value this brings to our students. Over and above the exercise it offers, it ensures students spend time in the local community where they focus on subject-specific learning objectives and work towards their targets.

The College places great importance on the **mental wellbeing of students**. Students have access to a specialist Mental Health practitioner and there is termly monitoring of students' mental health. This not only supports the individual but identifies more general trends that staff can proactively support. We have introduced strategies that has led to improvements in student ratings of their mental health and wellbeing. Improved emotional states in turn promote effective learning. When required, we rapidly provide bespoke therapeutic support. This year a small number of students experiencing high levels of distress, and in some cases with their place at college potentially at risk, have received intensive support and all except 4 have been able to remain at Homefield.

We have an ambitious **Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Award programme** which is highly inclusive, with students across all pathways becoming involved. In 23/24, 15 students completed the Certificate of Achievement and 9 completed the full award of **Bronze**. In addition, 2 students completed the Certificate of Achievement and 9 completed the full award of **Silver**. A number of continuing students have outstanding elements to complete; 2 students to complete an expedition and sections for Silver and Bronze and 7 to complete sections for Certificate of Achievement. *The aim for future years is that we continue to support students to undertake their DofE awards whilst linking these more closely to their EHCP targets and using the experiences they gain to provide evidence of progress within EFL.*

Students develop an understanding **of life in modern Britain** and become more active and safer in their communities. They are made aware of key British Values and are encouraged to be tolerant and inclusive. Wider risks are discussed, such as the risks of radicalisation and healthy sexual relationships including consent, to ensure that individual students understand these topics well enough to help keep themselves safe. The impact of this was recognised by inspectors. *"Students learn helpful information about healthy relationships, how to keep themselves safe and well-being."*

We have an aspirational careers strategy, known internally as 'living your best life', which includes all pathways and campuses. The programme of community and partnership engagement has led to greater understanding of how to support students in work and work experience is more frequently linked to students' aspirations. Consequently, the vast majority of students undertake some form of work experience. In 23/24, 78% undertook external work placements with companies such as Timpson, Boots and Waitrose, and 5% completed internal placements.

Work opportunities are effectively scaffolded through the commercial enterprises run by the college, which include Breward's Coffee Shop in Mountsorrel where students experience working in catering and hospitality and Spectrum Style in Barrow where students deliver hair, grooming and beauty treatments. These offer an initial step into work in a more supported and structured environment. Work has been undertaken to ensure that our own commercial activity supports a wider range of work experience opportunities that is responsive to a student's interests and their developing skills. This includes a hair, grooming and beauty salon where approx. 5 students have been able to develop their vocational skills.

Whilst the work experience offer has grown, there is a **developing disconnect with curriculum**. *Care needs to be taken to maintain the quality of the experiences students have*, and we need to ensure that work experience isn't used as a 'timetable filler' with unrealistic expectations of the timeframes required to set up an effective placement. During 23/24 some staff have not followed the referral process that is in place to ensure students have a meaningful work experience. The overreliance on job coaches to set targets without discussion with curriculum staff has meant that targets lack clarity and do not always closely link to EHCP outcomes.

There is a **clear framework for offering careers advice**. This includes job and progress coaches as well as two qualified advisors (Level 6 and 7). All leavers on Pathway 2 and Pathway 3 benefit from independent career advice through a 1-1 interview. However, it was recognised that *students would benefit from earlier advice and this is now being offered to second year students*.

The **enrichment offer** for our students improved during 23/24 with a wide range of enriching and engaging activities within the curriculum including a successful Dungeons and Dragons club set up by one of our students. We also ran our first Breward's social evening in the summer term attended by small group of students. Providing additional enrichment opportunities outside of college hours continues to be challenging, predominantly due to the requirement to provide personal transport and the geographical spread of students. *Managers continue to look for solutions to provide increased opportunities for students to further develop their social networks*.

Behaviour and Attitudes

The behaviour of the vast majority of students is exceptional. Dangerous behaviour is limited to a small number of students (less than 15% of the cohort). Students are respectful and tolerant of others and over time become more able to navigate themselves socially within their community and wider society. Leaders have taken significant care to embed the development of positive behaviour management into the curriculum. All staff undertake NAPPI training with regular updates ensuring that there is a common approach to the monitoring and management of behaviour across the College.

Often students with social, emotional mental health or emotional school-based avoidance do not display the typical physical / verbal behaviours and are more likely to withdraw or disengage. Some staff, particularly those in Bespoke and at our Nuneaton Campus, became desensitised to behaviours and there had been some acceptance and tolerance that led to under reporting. Training for staff has resulted in greater awareness and recognition of behaviours and reporting expectations.

Staff increasingly recognise the barriers students face and support them to understand and improve their knowledge of self-regulation. There is a focus on recognising and developing acceptable behaviours and having a positive attitude to learning. Staff work effectively with the specialist behaviour team and rigorously monitor for early warning signs. Ongoing staff development has led to an increase in the recording of low-level behaviours that allows for strategies to be quickly implemented to support students. This has resulted in a decrease in the levels of behaviour issues presented and the number of high-level behaviours reducing in severity over time. Behaviour support will increase in 24/25 with the employment of two trainee behaviour specialists.

The College has clear policies in relation to behaviour and attendance and staff work together to ensure that the small number of students who need additional interventions and monitoring are referred to **Fitness to Study**. For the majority of students, this leads to an improvement in their behaviour and attendance. For example, of the 17 16–18-year-olds referred during the year, 12 improved their attendance and the overall attendance of all 16–18-year-olds on Fitness to Study improved from 75% to 90% (in line with the college average). This has enabled students potentially at risk of leaving education to succeed and continue to make progress. Leaders and managers recognise that referrals to Fitness to Study in the early part of 23/24 were often delayed and did not always take account of wider issues impacting progress, with an over reliance on attendance as a trigger.

Attendance is similar to last year at 90% and remains high. LAC attendance is in line with college average as is those who receive free school meals. There is no difference in the attendance of male and female students. Nuneaton attendance is marginally lower than the college average at 88% impacted by 2 students with particularly low attendance. There is a significant trend of lower attendance for 16-18 year olds at 86% compared to 92% for 19+. Most were referred to Fitness to Study, however there are no particular trends within the cohort except a possible link to post COVID impacts and travel.

Bespoke attendance is more than 5% below college average and is particularly low for 16–18-year-olds at 80%. These are some of our hardest to reach students who have often been out of formal education for several years and a key aim of the bespoke programme is to reengage them. For the large majority, the programme achieves this with many having high attendance at their learning activities.

A potential factor in lower attendance for these groups is that whilst the Fitness to Study process once in place is effective, it is not always timely and so attendance can remain low. Whilst attendance is comparatively high on those programmes where the intended destination is work related activity, attendance of 90 – 92% may not be enough to sustain employment. *Managers need to explore flexing targets for different programmes based on intended destinations and students' starting points.*

There has been significant improvement in attendance at all 3 subcontractors because of closer oversight and improvement in functional skills teaching leading to higher levels of engagement.

Programme	23/24 Yr End	22/23 Yr End	Diff
MacIntyre	94.90%	89.1%	5.80%
TECK	86.10%	78.5%	7.60%
Enstruct	84.10%	71.5%	12.60%

Further analysis of 23/24 trends and early 24/25 will form part of our ongoing work in 24/25. This will require a review of register completion and a move away from a daily attendance to allow us to focus on lesson attendance. Managers also need to maintain their close monitoring of student attendance and ensure timely interventions.

Leadership and Management

Leaders are highly ambitious for students and work to raise awareness and improve integration within the local community for people who have additional learning and / or communication needs. Leaders support the curriculum well, recruiting appropriately experienced and qualified staff, and ensure the curriculum is adequately resourced to deliver the highly individualised programmes they provide for their students. There has been further investment in the management of the curriculum and quality, but the year has also seen a number of changes of management responsibilities. *This is ongoing and will be fully reviewed during 24/25 to ensure that the management structure supports the improvement in the quality of education. A key focus for all staff in 24/25 will be greater ownership and autonomy as well as accountability.*

As a result of an on-going investment in resources and staff development, students benefit from an effective and **fully integrated approach between therapies and curriculum**. The historic gap has been removed and there is now a strong culture of collaboration. This has been achieved through a clear vision and strong leadership. Teaching staff recognise the positive impact this integrated approach is having on student behaviour and progress, and when issues arise, they quickly involve therapies and the behaviour specialists.

College leaders continue to make **positive progress implementing the Total Communication strategy**. Following consultation with our students, we have moved away from Widget Symbols and have transitioned to using photos to support communication. These are available to all staff and with the support of our students *will continue to be developed in 24/25 to be bespoke to our students*. Staff are also being encouraged to use more signing as part of their communication with students to reinforce understanding.

Leaders and managers work well with stakeholders, including local authorities (LAs), which has led to significant growth with Homefield becoming a provider of choice. Early and timely communication with LAs, schools, parents and potential students ensures safe transition and ongoing support, which in turn leads to high levels of retention. Work with partners focuses on developing an appropriate curriculum offer and ensuring needs can be met. They have also developed more accessible language and holistic targets. For example, work with LAs on developing the language within EHCPs is enabling students and their carers to engage more effectively and take greater ownership of learning.

Leaders have **significantly improved oversight of the subcontracted provision** in the second half of the year. There is a developing culture of partnership, which is having a positive impact on the quality of education as well the behaviours and attendance of students. *24/25 offers even greater opportunities to share best practice and provide support from specialist staff such as Careers.*

There are a wide range of **processes in place to monitor the quality** of teaching, learning and assessment. These include quality assurance of assessment evidence, learning walks and curriculum area reviews. Whilst these are mainly effective, some are process-heavy and monitoring is onerous, detracting from the time available to improve quality. Quality processes do not always effectively manage risk and reporting formats make it difficult for managers to have a clear oversight of risk and impact of quality improvement activities.

Formal observations are undertaken with new staff, including those in teacher training, as well as those identified as needing specific support to improve practice. This process has been used to support several staff to develop their practice and move off performance improvement plans. Managers carefully link development activities to what they have identified and as a result CPL

helps improve practice. *There is a need to have a longer-term CPL plan that develops our staff to achieve the targets set out in the quality improvement plan.*

Managers regularly seek out the opinions of students alongside a more formal student survey. Student voice, and in particular the Student Union, informs and influences life at college. For example, it has led to timetable changes, targeted therapeutic intervention and alterations in accessibility. *Plans are in place to implement regular surveys and obtain more formal feedback that leaders can use to inform wider decision making.*

Trustees, along with the wider leadership team, have a clear vision. They understand their role and offer a wide range of valuable experience including GFE, local authority, safeguarding, therapies, legal and finance. As well as regular Trustee meetings, there are two sub-committees: Teaching, Learning & Assessment and Finance & General Purposes. The Board and sub-committees work effectively to support and challenge leaders; in 22/23 it was Trustees who initiated a significant staff pay award. Many Trustees take active roles in the College and participate in activities. *To maximise the benefit of their experience and oversight, there is a need to improve the structure / regularity of involvement outside of formal meetings.*

Leaders recognise the importance of staff wellbeing and staff retention and the impact that this has on the educational outcomes for students. They have undertaken a range of activities to improve staff wellbeing from initiatives to mitigate the impact of the cost of living to enhancing occupational health support.

It is recognised that providing high quality education requires a whole-college approach and college support services play a vital role in supporting the curriculum and our students.

Human Resources (HR) offer a range of services that support the curriculum and contribute to the quality of education. They support managers to recruit new staff and ensure we meet our statutory requirements of safer recruitment. They also carefully monitor staff qualifications and mandatory training and take a lead on staff wellbeing. In 23/24 they completed a wellbeing review with staff and have since changed the Employee Assistance Programme provider. Staff benefit from access to a range of services including counselling and wellbeing vouchers. It is recognised that many of the HR team are new to education and that some processes, including recruitment, may be improved with a greater understanding of curriculum. There is also a need for line managers to have a better understanding of, and compliance with, HR processes. *In 24/25 there is a need for closer working between curriculum and HR to improve communication and better understand each other's roles and responsibilities.*

Marketing and communications promote the College and our student successes across a wide range of social media platforms. They run our website with accessibility at the core and have made changes based on student feedback, ensuring our promotional and information materials encompass total communication. They organise and manage a range of events including graduation, summer celebration and college Open Days. They also support internal communications including creating the fortnightly staff briefings. They support the curriculum well, providing expert guidance on curriculum resources and work with our businesses to increase footfall. They also offer work experience opportunities for students, and this has led to one student becoming an apprentice and now progressing onto university.

Admissions support the transition of students into college well. The majority of students are seen prior to joining the college and are carefully assessed to ensure their needs can be met. However, a small number of students are not seen prior to places being agreed and this can lead to less effective transitions and some requirements to change pathways when they start college.

This needs reviewing as part of a wider transitions and induction review to ensure the right students are on the right courses. Late LA confirmation of funding placements contributes to this issue and ongoing work with our funding partners is planned to further improve admissions in 24/25.

Finance supports the curriculum well, responding quickly to resource requests. **Finances are well managed**, and the team provide the Trustees with extensive financial information that allows them to ensure the College remains on a sound and sustainable financial footing. *One area for development is the need for a wider understanding of the discretionary bursary*, which is not fully utilised despite the advice given during the admissions process. Whilst college finances remain strong, there are opportunities to make even greater use of our resources, including *ensuring timetabling maximises staff and room utilisation*. This requires earlier collaboration in developing students' individual timetables.

The College has a robust and effective safeguarding culture, with clear policies and procedures that are carefully observed by staff. Safeguarding is of paramount importance for staff and Trustees. Policies and procedures are regularly updated, and staff are aware of how to access safeguarding policies and how to report a concern. In the short inspection report from July 2024 Ofsted stated that 'the arrangements for safeguarding are effective.'

The College has invested in new software during the year to enhance the monitoring of IT use and achieved Cyber Essentials in 2024. Staff training on safeguarding has been impactful and has led to increased reports into the safeguarding team and from a wider range of staff. For example, to prepare for safeguarding week in November 2023, training was delivered to enable staff to deliver activities around consent and as a result students can demonstrate a good understanding of consent within different contexts. There is a Lead Trustee for Safeguarding who meets regularly with our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and takes an active and effective role in the development of safeguarding practice within the College.

Safeguarding and Prevent is embedded within the curriculum and students learn how to live safely within their communities, supplemented by 1-1 sessions where a specific need is identified. Students can articulate why they need to stay safe online and *this work will progress in 24/25 as part of our strategy to develop digital skills*.

The highly positive working relationship between the Safeguarding and Therapies teams ensures that appropriate pastoral interventions are established to support students. Safeguarding concerns raised with carers are promptly addressed and so students make significantly better progress, becoming more independent and active citizens.