

IAG Gold Standard assessment – Healing Specialist Science and Foundation College

External Assessment carried out on 01.05.08

**Assessor – Brenda Hardy
In Attendance – Lisa Hanson-Dows, Curriculum Adviser**

Overview

Healing School is a specialist science and foundation college for pupils aged 11 to 16 years with 804 on roll. The school is situated in the village of Healing, 4 miles to the north west of Grimsby. Learners come from a wide variety of backgrounds and attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils from the ethnic minorities or from homes where English is not the first language is well below the national average. The number of pupils on the special educational needs register is 25% and the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is also well below the national average.

Assessment

In order to assess the range and quality of IAG provision, it was necessary to start with the institutional procedures. A comprehensive range of paper-based evidence was provided, a planned programme for assessment was prepared and arrangements were made for us to meet and talk at length with Derek Higgins, Connexions Manager, Ann Addison, Head Teacher, Linda Wyatt, Connexions PA and a selection of young people. We were shown materials, policy documents, schemes of work and lesson plans, given free access to any parts of the school and the opportunity to talk to any staff and learners. A lesson on preparation for work experience was identified as an opportunity for the assessor to witness first-hand an element of the underpinning personal, social, health and careers education (PSHCE) programme. The school has a written policy for IAG and a coherent PSHCE programme with schemes of work for each year group from Year 7. A dedicated team of teachers delivers PSHCE; this team is split into pairs, each pair taking the lead in one area of delivery. They have regular meetings and staff development opportunities.

The assessment procedure took a full day. During the assessment, observation of IAG practice was carried out and visual inspection of the available facilities for learners to access information, advice and guidance confirmed that these were in place and accessible. The relevant evidence demonstrating each Element and Component of the North East Lincolnshire Gold Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance was provided and matched to the required standard as described below.

Element 1 – Accessible and Visible Information

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, credible and impartial information which meets all needs

There is a Learning Resource Centre (LRC) to which all learners have access between 8.00 am and 4.30 pm each day. The LRC is stocked with current and relevant information presented in a range of formats. There are computers with internet access and the student information and self assessment software 'Fast Tomato' is networked throughout the school.

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

All school staff are aware of the range of available information as described above and support learners in accessing information appropriate to their needs.

Element 2 – Accessible Advice and Guidance

Component 1: Advice and Guidance practitioners will possess the necessary skills, knowledge, training and qualifications to identify and respond to each learner's needs.

Teachers can make learner referrals as and when necessary and PAs have regular formal and informal meetings to share information with school staff. There is a designated room with phone and internet enabled computer for the use of guidance workers in school. Learners are given introductory talks by Connexions staff and invited to access help whenever it is required. Day-to-day communication between school and advice and guidance workers is excellent and provides a strong basis for sound partnership working.

The school works closely with Connexions to ensure that all learners have regular access to a qualified Generic or Careers Personal Adviser and learners are made aware of the Connexions centre in Grimsby.

All members of the school staff and external guidance workers are CRB checked.

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

Connexions PAs have access to staff for additional information or discussion if needed, as do personnel from other relevant external organisations. This is a relatively small organisation and the Connexions Manager actively co-ordinates the work of all advice and guidance practitioners to ensure best response to all learners' needs.

Element 3 – Linked IAG Provision

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

The Connexions Manager works closely with the Headteacher and tutors to ensure that all IAG provision is linked within the management structure of the school. There is an ethos of developing each individual to achieve their potential and of raising achievement via self-motivation and self-awareness. The Headteacher regards Personal, Social, Health and Careers Education (PSHCE) programme as central to developing well-rounded young people prepared to meet the challenges they face when leaving school. Consequently, PSHCE is regarded as having equal merit with all other subject within the school and budget requirements are considered in the same way as for any other department.

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

The Connexions Manager is responsible for liaison with Connexions PAs and personnel from other external IAG agencies as required. The school's Partnership Agreement with Connexions Humber defines agreed procedures and any learner transition between IAG services is overseen by the Connexions Manager.

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

This is a school serving a largely affluent and socially and economically advantaged area. Consequently, there is less need for the range and diversity of guidance practitioners that may be expected in schools serving a wider and more diverse clientele. Whenever necessary, however, arrangements are in place for referral to appropriate agencies and services.

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

Well-structured and co-ordinated systems for the delivery of advice and guidance to individual learners are in place with extremely effective referral mechanisms. An excellent relationship exists between the school and advice and guidance staff with a high degree of integration into the school systems enabling effective delivery.

Component 2: IAG will be underpinned by a planned personal development programme based upon national recommendations

The planned PSHCE programme is written and co-ordinated by the Connexions Manager and delivered by a team of specialist teachers, the content of the programme is based upon DCSF recommendations and covers careers education, sex and relationships education and equality and diversity. Learners receive:

- individual progress reviews
- support and referral for specialist advice and guidance
- careers education and personal development activities to promote job search including CVs, application forms and interviews
- access to available financial support e.g. EMA

All teaching and learning materials are available for staff and lesson plans are prepared and adhered to.

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

The school has a written policy on equal opportunities and the school handbook sets out clear structures and procedures to ensure equality of IAG provision. The Learning Resource Centre and PA interview room are on the first floor, however should a young person not be able to access the first floor, arrangements are in place for the Connexions Manager's office, situated on the ground floor, to be used. IAG materials are available in a variety of formats and differentiated information is available for learners with special needs.

All learners are made aware of how to access information, advice and guidance from staff within school and those from outside agencies.

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

The Grimsby Connexions Centre is signposted as an alternative source of IAG. Referrals for IAG interventions on other services' and agencies' premises are made 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

Information on all options post 16 is made available to all students via a careers convention to which a range of post 16 providers are invited. All students have free access to the Connexions Careers PA and promotional information from local providers is available in the LRC.

EBP work experience diaries and Connexions Humber i4u Planners are used with every student.

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 institution, Healing School does not favour any particular progression route for its young people. Many progress on to further education either at Franklin College or Grimsby Institute and all available Apprenticeships are discussed with learners. The school has been at the forefront of testing and trialling the new Area Wide Prospectus and Common Application Process (CAP) but has been frustrated by a lack of development with this potentially valuable tool for impartiality.

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 has a number of learning opportunities that students are encouraged to access which relate to learning and work. Enterprise activities are on offer together with specific enterprise days, there are strong links with Humberside Education Business Partnership (HEBP), and work experience is offered to all learners. Work experience is strongly integrated into the overall IAG programme.

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

Local labour market information (LMI) is gained via work experience placements with local employers. As mentioned above, the schools works closely with EBP to ensure that all learners receive work-related learning to ensure successful progression.

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 above, this school has been very keen to help in developing the local electronic Area Prospectus and inbuilt Common Application Process (www.lincs2.co.uk) and this has been built into the PSHCE programme. Unfortunately, the course information contained in the Area Prospectus had, at the time of this assessment, not been centrally kept up to date and therefore has become seen as unreliable. The CAP has been tried but not found to have been the preferred method of application, either by learners or receiving learning providers. These concerns have been passed to the Local Authority by the school's Connexions Manager.

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

Staff delivering IAG and the PSHCE programme ensure that material is suitable for the learners. Staff have regular meeting both formally and informally with each other and outside agencies. The Connexions Manager has worked with staff from two other schools, Wintringham and Hereford, to write materials and lesson plans – these are to be made available to other schools via the Lincs2 Area Prospectus website.

Component 2: IAG provision will ensure that outcomes of learners' reviews are acknowledged and incorporated into advice and guidance sessions.

Connexions PAs and the school feel that communication regarding learners is good. Information about learners from guidance interventions is held securely by Connexions on the CCIS Trakrekord system and from reviews by the school within its SIMS system. Information held is shared as appropriate.

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

Learners are invited to feedback informally on IAG provision. The Connexions Manager intends to introduce a questionnaire to assess the appropriateness of PSHCE provision in the school.

Regular learner meetings take place where a variety of subjects are discussed as a learner group with the tutor. The manager has conducted a number of surveys with learners and staff – QMOL – Quality Monitoring On-Line. Connexions PAs are able to advocate for the learner if necessary. Staff and management meetings promote discussion between staff regarding the help and support available to learners and adjustments are then made as necessary.

Recommendation

Healing School provides outstanding examples of good practice in the provision of information, advice and guidance. Indeed, many elements of the delivery of IAG at Healing, especially underpinned by the importance placed on IAG by the headteacher, could be used as exemplary practice across the sub-region.

There is very strong commitment from all the staff to maintain and improve the standards achieved by the students attending. There is also a strong emphasis on individual development of self-awareness and self-motivation. The Senior Leadership Team recognises the importance of IAG in its broadest sense being a foundation for individual development, the knock on effect being raising of attainment at GCSE or similar.

There is, however, a note of caution to be appended to this excellent report. Much of the success of the IAG provision in the school can be firmly accorded to the school's Connexions Manager, Derek Higgins. He carries a major responsibility for the implementation of the PSHCE programme, the liaison with external agencies and the co-ordination of all IAG activities. The school must ensure that the responsibilities he holds are more equitably shared in order that, when the time comes for Derek to move on, the current excellent IAG provision may be maintained. It would not be reasonable to expect that a new appointee could single-handedly pick up all that Derek has put in place.

However, I have no doubt that the school currently meets the prescribed standard and I strongly recommend that it should be awarded the North East Lincolnshire Gold Standard for IAG.

Brenda Hardy 04/05/08

Date of Award: 14th November 2008

Date for re-assessment: April 2011