

**IAG Gold Standard assessment –
Tollbar Business and Enterprise College, New Waltham, Grimsby.**

**External Assessment carried out on 15th October 2008
Assessor – Vince Barrett In attendance – Paula Shaw, Curriculum Adviser**

Overview

Tollbar Business and Enterprise College is a large 11-19 mixed Specialist Foundation College, situated to the south of Grimsby in North East Lincolnshire. The college achieved business and enterprise status in 2002, gaining a second specialism in humanities in 2006. There are 2200 learners on roll, drawn predominantly from surrounding villages but with a significant number attending from across the borough.

The college has an established sixth form, which has a long record of working in collaboration with Grimsby Institute, currently serving a total of 187 learners, 100 of whom are in Year 13 and 87 in Year 12. All Year 12 learners are enrolled on International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD) courses. This follows the college's decision to offer only IBD from September 2008.

Assessment

Prior to the formal assessment, Lisa Hanson-Dows, formerly Connexions Curriculum Adviser for North East Lincolnshire and the new Curriculum Adviser, Paula Shaw, worked closely with key personnel in the college, 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 Rob Colbert, Citizenship Curriculum Leader, Gareth Cookson, Assistant Citizenship Curriculum Leader, Heather Boothroyd, Vice Principal, Graham Peart, Connexions Personal Adviser and a range of teachers, learning mentors and library staff randomly selected as the assessment progressed. I also formally interviewed three learners representing the college council and, informally during the lunch break, randomly selected young people who happened to be in the dining facility. The college principal was not available for interview which is a pity as much of the college's IAG provision described in this report appears to be largely attributable to processes and procedures which he has himself put in place and developed.

The assessment procedure took a full day and I was provided with a full programme for the 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 college. 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 library to which all learners have access before, during and after the working day. This facility is staffed by qualified librarians who are on hand to assist learners in research and information finding. There is also a separate careers library where learners may access hard-copy information such as prospectuses. All information contained in the careers library is current.

Connexions Personal Advisers have a designated interview room with phone and internet access. This is located in the sixth form accommodation and slightly away from the main college buildings but is nonetheless accessible to learners. Referrals are largely made via staff working in the Citizenship Curriculum Area but learners may self-refer at any time by filling in their requirements on a form located outside the Citizenship office. PAs have regular formal and informal meetings to share relevant information with college staff.

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

The college has a team of learning support staff; all learners have a named personal tutor and access to a Learning Mentor or professional counsellor when appropriate. All staff with a responsibility for the provision of information, advice, guidance or learner support interviewed as a part of the assessment process demonstrated clear understanding of the breadth and purpose of information available. There are professional development opportunities and cross-team meetings in place to ensure this understanding is maintained.

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.

All Connexions personnel working in the college are professionally qualified in Advice and Guidance and the college learning support staff all possess appropriate professional qualifications. Other external professionals e.g. social, health or youth services are consulted as necessary and all are qualified and experienced in practising in their particular fields. There is a strong multi-agency approach in the college and the Connexions service is well integrated. The college has a continuing professional development programme to ensure that practitioners' knowledge and/or skills are regularly updated. All college IAG personnel have received training on child protection procedures and statutory Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) safeguarding checks are in place.

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

Systems for communication between college staff and external advice and guidance practitioners are good and provide a strong basis for partnership working. Multi-agency team meetings are convened as appropriate to ensure the needs of learners with multiple physical or learning difficulties are met. The work of House tutors complements the work of PAs and a referral system to external IAG providers as appropriate is in operation. See Element 4.1 below for detail.

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

All information, advice and guidance procedures at Toll Bar BEC are overseen by the team of Vice Principals, Heather Boothroyd, Janice Hornby and Steve Moon. Each has responsibility for discrete areas but ensure full co-ordination of IAG processes and procedures. The college invests considerable resources in working to instil learners' pride in learning and achievement and much of its success can be attributed to diligent regard for linking all aspects of IAG in order to meet every learner's needs as they move through the college.

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

Rob Colbert (Citizenship Curriculum Leader) is the first point of contact for all internal and external people and agencies working on the college site and he also has responsibility for management of the Citizenship building and PSHCE curriculum. Involvement of external IAG agencies is fully co-ordinated and referrals are made as and when appropriate for individual learners. The IAG services offered by the college and external agencies is made clear and learners report that they feel are well supported when referred to or between IAG providers.

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 college 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 UCAS, student finance, accommodation or transition are addressed by the most appropriate practitioner. The Citizenship Curriculum Area Management Team act as mentors to new staff, ensuring a good understanding of the range of information advice and guidance services and protocols in the college.

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

Toll Bar BEC is situated in a largely affluent and socially advantaged area but it does serve a very diverse range of learner need. Consequently, robust systems for the provision of appropriate information advice and guidance for such a broad clientele is essential. The college acknowledges its responsibility to provide this and all IAG is given in the context of individual learners' backgrounds, interests and aspirations. This is evidenced by the fact that every learner is allocated a personal tutor to whom they can refer for help and support with any aspect of their learning or circumstances. Toll Bar BEC operates a system of 6 Houses: Cygnus, Indus, Lyra, Orion, Perseus and Vela. Each House is divided into vertically-arranged House groups. Each House group has a House Tutor and contains four or five learners from each year group. House tutors deliver a prescribed tutorial programme linked to the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes where learners are given the opportunity to gain information about economic well-being, social and health issues affecting them and all programme materials are centrally located on the college's intranet system. To complement this, the college offers extensive enrichment activities (see Element 4.2). Engaging in these activities allows young people to expand their horizons and develop personal and social skills which will serve them well when choosing their progression routes from college.

Tutors work very closely with the team of Learning Mentors, Vice Principals and Assistant Principals to ensure that all guidance needs are met. In addition, a Connexions PA is available in college every day to whom learners are referred or may self-refer. Consequently, although this is a very large college, all learners can be individually supported.

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

This is a great strength of the college's IAG provision. Citizenship is defined as a discrete curriculum area which comprises four main elements, Personal, Social and Health Education, Citizenship, Work-Related Learning and Vocational Education. Much of the citizenship curriculum is externally accredited; all learners in Year 9 work towards a BTEC Level 2 Certificate in Employability and in Key Stage 4 all work towards Levels 1 and 2 AQA Preparation for Working Life and Certificate in Enterprise and Employability. No learner reached the end of KS4 last year without achieving at least Level 1 in these qualifications. The Citizenship Curriculum area also has responsibility for delivering Applied GCSE in Leisure and Tourism, Applied Health and Social Care and Wider Key Skills.

The House tutorial programme (see Element 4.1) complements the taught citizenship curriculum and contributes to learners' personal development. There is also a personalised careers education programme and full participation in work experience ensures that learners are well prepared to enter the next stage of education, training or working life. In addition to the taught programmes, the Citizenship Curriculum Area offers access to a wide range of personal development and enrichment activities. These include:

The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme - all learners are encouraged to take part at bronze, silver or gold level.

Lifestyle - a community-based project run by Humberside Police each year during the summer holiday. Successful participants' achievements are recognised and they are awarded certificates and prizes in college by Humberside Police. Participation in this scheme by Tollbar BEC learners is very high.

Taster Days, Open Days and Career Fairs. Learners are encouraged to attend these and, in discussion, many feel they are invaluable in helping them to make a decision about their future.

Education through external agencies. Regular visits to the college are made by outside agencies to enrich the personal development programme. These have included presentations on topics such as health and safety on work experience, homelessness, drug awareness and multiculturalism. Learners say they value and enjoy the wide variety of extra-curricular opportunities offered, including drama sport, and music.

The Young Enterprise scheme in which groups of learners devise and run a business is another excellent way in which they benefit from the college's specialist status. Awards and pictorial evidence of success in this scheme are prominently displayed around the college.

The Citizenship Curriculum Area staffing comprises the Curriculum Leader, Deputy Curriculum Leader and Assistant Curriculum Leader. There are 11 additional staff who teach within the curriculum area.

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 in Element 4.1 above, the college serves a wide range of learners and there is rigorous monitoring of 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 Learning Support Unit which offers excellent support for those who, for whatever reason, are unable to fully engage with learning in the classroom.

There is a comprehensive induction programme for learners joining the college in Year 7 and for those coming towards the end of their compulsory education in Year 11 and IAG materials are available in a variety of formats and differentiated information is available for learners with special needs.

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 (medical, 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

Toll Bar BEC does not have any vested interest in retaining post-16 learners on courses or programmes that are not matched to their needs or ambitions and impartiality of information, advice and guidance, especially with regard to career and progression, is seen to be very important. As mentioned in the overview to this report, the college has taken the decision to specialise in the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD) post-16 and it is consequently vital that all Year 11 learners have the opportunity to compare this with alternative provision. All learners interviewed were aware of available opportunities and many were attending or had attended open evenings at Franklin College and Grimsby Institute. Both of these providers, along with work-based learning and apprenticeship providers are invited to attend the Toll Bar BEC Careers Fairs.

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

The PA has access to a range of learner information – from Connexions Humber's Trakrekord database and the college's internal recording systems in order to help assessment of guidance need. Learners are fully informed and supported in selecting their next steps and in taking necessary action to achieve them.

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 college offers a number of resources and activities that learners are encouraged to access which relate to further learning and work. Participation in Young Enterprise projects is strongly encouraged and work experience is integrated into the overall curriculum of the college. Clearly, the business and enterprise specialism is interwoven through all aspects of college life. The DCSF 'Which Way Now?' brochure and Connexions Humber i4u Progression Planners are used with every Year 11 learner.

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

All learners undertake a period of work experience during KS4 with local employers. As a part of the preparation for this, learners explore local and national labour market information (LMI) in order to gain an understanding of employment markets which are expanding and those on decline. In addition, the college works closely with the Humber EBP to ensure that all learners receive work-related experience as a part of the curriculum – in which employers are involved – 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.

The North East Lincolnshire electronic Area Wide Prospectus (www.lincs2.co.uk) has recently re-launched and the college is in the process of loading details of all its 14-19 learning opportunities. Learners are already encouraged to seek information via this facility and staff training is now available in the use of this and the integrated common application process (CAP). Learner training for access is built in to the PSHCE programme for 2008/9. The college is running a large scale pilot this year and intends to use the CAP with approximately 160 learners making applications to post-16 providers.

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

College policies are clear and were included in the portfolio of evidence presented prior to this assessment. As indicated in Element 3.2, the college has in place detailed mechanisms for ensuring liaison between IAG practitioners and these include stated systems for information sharing, child protection and data protection. Staff delivering IAG and the PSHCE 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 from staff within college and from outside agencies.

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

All significant IAG interventions are recorded in college learner records. In addition, Connexions Personal Advisers maintain learner guidance information in the Trakrekord database. Teachers and PAs are available for consultation at parents' evenings.

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

Due to the fact that this college operates within an ethos of self-motivation and pride in the college, great efforts are made by the leadership team to assess the effectiveness of IAG provision through feedback from learners.

In discussion, learners said that they feel they are able to feed back to senior managers on all aspects of college life, including access to information advice and guidance, through the very active college student council. All 72 House tutor groups have a council representative who feeds back group views to their elected House Council representative and these 6 House Council representatives meet regularly with the principal and members of the senior leadership team. Learners are always informed as to why a suggestion is or is not adopted and they can quote instances of when their views have had an influence on how the college is run.

Recommendation

Toll Bar BEC is an example of outstanding and embedded IAG good practice. The school has built a very strong emphasis on education of 'the whole person' and there is pictorial and tangible evidence all around the college site celebrating learners' achievement in sporting, cultural, enterprise and academic fields. There is a pride in being a part of Toll Bar BEC expressed by both staff and learners; this results in a commitment to achieving successes and these are regularly reported in the Toll Bar Telegraph – a newsletter for staff, parents learner and the wider community.

There is very strong commitment from all staff to whom I spoke in continuously improving the standards achieved by all learners and there is an emphasis on individual development through self-awareness and self-motivation. The senior leadership team recognises the importance of IAG in its broadest sense being a foundation for achievement of the excellent examination success enjoyed by Toll Bar BEC's learners.

Vince Barrett
Connexions Humber Gold Standard Assessor
20.10.08

Date of Award: 14th November 2008

Date for re-assessment: October 2011