

Stockton Sixth Form College

Supporting Student Success

3 yearly report on disability action plan 2007/2010

A number of changes are being introduced which will enable us to track the achievement, retention and progression of students with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD). These changes also mean that it is easier to ensure that information about students is not 'lost' as students change teachers or tutors during their course. The Learner Support department keeps detailed records of the progress, achievement and final destination of those students who qualify for additional funding and receive additional support.

We currently have statistical analysis on applications, support and retention, achievement and progression.

We have re-designed the application form so that it includes more discrete categories of disability. These categories conform to those used in the current legislation. It is now clearer to students what constitutes a disability with the aim of encouraging disclosure. All students who disclose a disability are interviewed by a senior member of staff who will ensure that relevant information is communicated to staff. However, despite the changes to the form we still find that a number of students do not disclose a disability and additional students are identified via contact with schools and through conversations with enrolled students. This has meant that it has proved difficult to track trends although we are confident that we do track and support individual students.

We have grappled with the problem of ensuring that staff are informed of student disabilities and medical problems and Learner Support now provide a comprehensive list of students on the shared M drive which all staff can access.

We conducted a disability audit of staff to ensure that the College is able to respond to staff with disabilities. Any new member of staff now has an opportunity to disclose a disability upon appointment. The DED and action plan was written following consultation with students and staff. The Learner Support department provides an opportunity for students to evaluate its provision and regular focus groups provide an opportunity for students with disabilities to comment on their experience of College. The response has been overwhelmingly positive.

We have actively promoted the opportunities offered by the College to disabled students. A copy of the College Disability Statement and Disability Duty is available on the web-site. The web-site has been re-designed and as part of that process it is now fully accessible. An accessible website ensures that all visitors have the same user experience whether they use assistive technology or not. Our website meets level 2 (and in part level 3) of the [W3C Web Accessibility Initiative](#) standards and guidelines for creating accessible websites. The web-site contains a number of features which are listed under the heading – accessibility.

One of our key marketing tools – the prospectus – includes information on student support and also a description of the extra support available. The prospectus also clearly signposts opportunities for students to get additional information.

Staff have been trained in the implications of the DED for themselves as teachers and employees. There has been additional staff training in this area. For instance, all staff training looking at a range of scenarios involving students with learning difficulties and disabilities. All staff training on embedding equality and diversity in the classroom. In addition individual staff have attended relevant conferences and completed on-line training in this area.

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We have identified aspects in the design of teaching materials which make them accessible to students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia or visual impairment. A standardised format for handouts and other College produced material has been incorporated into communications policy of the staff handbook. Staff training has been given in the rationale for this format and in the production of materials. All new and revised materials now follow these guidelines. The Learner Support Department offers an adaptation of resources service to all staff to ensure accessibility. A 'Working with Dyslexia' checklist has been issued to all teaching staff.

Techdis Tool Bar has been integrated into the College intranet and internet pages to allow for greater accessibility for students with visual processing difficulties. The VLE is currently being revamped and will be in line with all common web accessibility guidelines.

The College has made every effort to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities by providing reasonable adjustments for their needs. Under the auspices of the Learner Support Department the provision of specialist equipment to support students has increased to include laptops, dictaphones, large screen monitor and large keyboard in addition to numerous software packages to improve accessibility and suit a range of learning styles. The Learner Support Manager has produced a Transition Guide for prospective disabled students to be used during recruitment events. A Guide for Tutors has been produced and circulated to all staff to raise awareness of certain disabilities and give guidance on how best to support students in the classroom, this is updated yearly. Modifications to our medical room, including a hoist, have enabled us to accommodate students in wheelchairs. Several staff have been trained in the use of the evacuation chairs and the hoist.

The Learner Support Department liaises with university support departments passing on transition information of LDD students to ensure future learning needs are being discussed and a smoother and successful transition into higher education is supported.

The Learner Support Department liaises with partner schools to discuss transition into further education; this information is then disseminated to relevant staff. The department also attend Pupil Support Network meetings at schools to discuss, with individual students, their choice of progression route offering impartial advice and guidance.

Varying levels of assessment are carried out on students identified as possibly having specific learning difficulties. These are carried out initially in house by specially trained staff and if further assessment is required they are then referred to relevant agencies. An additional two members of staff have been employed during this period to ensure current support needs are met.

There have been some additional modifications to the building. Adjustable height benches have been fitted in Biology Lab 1 and a Computer lab. In future any ICT and science teaching of students with a disability will take place in these labs. The emergency exit from the exam hall has been modified following a recommendation of the Accessibility Audit of the College.

The planned new build was designed to be fully accessible, in accordance with current legislation, and at all points in its design the needs of students with disabilities were being taken into account. Following the withdrawal of funding for this project, the same principles will underpin any refurbishment and extension building.

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The impact of legislation on current policies and procedures is constantly considered. Modifications to the building and building plans have ensured that almost all areas of the College are accessible. We have ensured that our building is accessible to parents and prospective students on Open Evenings and Parent's Evenings. We have examined our policies regarding visits to ensure that these are accessible to all students and their parents.