

Reaching beyond all expectations



Annual Review 2008/2009

Report on the year (2008/09)



I am delighted to report on a further year of achievement and progress for the College. Over the year the College provided specialist education and training for an average of 141 residential and 20 day students, with over 250 external students accessing other programmes and projects.

Of the students who left us in July 2009, 76% were progressing on to further/higher education, training, employment and occupation, whilst 47% planned to move into independent or supported living arrangements. Academic and personal achievements remained very high with 96% full achievement rate.

College progress was also recognised during the course of the year through a number of awards and accolades. We were delighted that our Chief Executive and Principal, Helen Sexton's outstanding contribution to the National Star College and to the specialist education sector over 28 years was recognised through the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) National STAR Award for Lifetime Achievement.

It was a year that highlighted our expertise in cutting edge use of technology in enabling and empowering severely disabled people. The National Star College's work was highlighted in specialist reports and journals during the year for its effective practice, featuring at conferences and contributing to reports as a source of expertise in the specialist sector.

Our extensive regional and national profile as a leading residential provider was complemented in the year with the continued development of projects and new programmes. Our strong links within Gloucestershire included involvement in the 16-19 Strategic Partnership and the Children and Young People's Partnership Board. Successful locally based programmes included the Learning Independence for Travel (LIFT) project, equipping disabled young people with the skills and confidence to access public transport, the Fast Track and Active Employability programmes, which developed employability skills and supported employment opportunities for disabled people.

During the year the Board continued to work closely with the Senior Management Team on both the strategic direction of the College and its performance. The importance we place on the involvement, training and development of our staff was again recognised this year through the Investors in People (IiP) Award, Bronze status. During the course of the year we commissioned a piece of work through the Black Leadership Initiative to further develop our understanding of potential barriers to learning for black and minority ethnic students as well as strengthening our relationships with local communities.

There were some challenges and uncertainties this year, with core funding from the Learning and Skills Council receiving no annual increase for the second year in succession and new future funding arrangements on the



horizon through the Machinery of Government changes and Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill. The introduction of new arrangements under the Act from April 2010 will see us working more closely with Local Authorities and our successful growth in local and regional work over recent years has positioned the organisation well to respond to the new opportunities.

The major capital development programme for the main campus at Ullenwood experienced unfortunate delays due to capital funding uncertainty from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), which had previously pledged 50% capital funding support. With phases 1 and 2 already completed by 2008, we had anticipated the substantive elements of new build phases 3 and 4 being built during 2009. However, a national over-commitment of capital funding by the LSC prevented the planned start of these next phases. The College, however, is committed to building phases 3 and 4 and will be looking at ways in which we can move forward with this without government funding.



Shawn Parsons.

S D E Parsons
Chairman



Student Achievements Learning and Living; Working and Giving

Our students are the heart and soul of the College. Their continued commitment and enthusiasm to making the very most of life is inspirational – illustrated not only in their determination to achieve their personal goals, but in their efforts to contribute to the wider community.

Learning

It's all about long term goals. And every one of our students has an individual learning programme to help them get to where they want to be.

Along the way, students focus on personal learning, living and work targets, with external accreditation where appropriate. Not only do the vast majority achieve their targets – but external verification reports indicate that they usually exceed the standards required.

In addition, the whole College 'experience' contributes directly to helping students realise their goals and aspirations when they leave us.

Living

There's a huge emphasis on the well-being of our students and on encouraging them to 'stay healthy'. And, in response, students take full advantage of a range of high-quality therapeutic services delivered by trained staff – enabling them to manage their own physical health.

Relaxation sessions and access to counselling and behavioural support programmes give added emphasis to the need for emotional health, and the College continues to nurture effective partnerships with healthcare providers and external specialist services.

In further pursuit of a healthy lifestyle, students can take part in an excellent range of leisure activities including sport, fitness, swimming and outdoor pursuits. And, of course, many take advantage of healthy meal options in the Star Café, where they are actively involved in menu planning.

Giving

Volunteering, young enterprise activities and leisure programmes are strongly encouraged by the College. Students continue to grasp opportunities to take part in schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, and to be part of an 'envoy' programme which involves interviewing staff, hosting visits, and promoting the College.

Keen to be involved, and to shape College life, one in every five students is an elected representative on a student body. A Student Parliament meets regularly with the Senior Management Team with input and suggestions from the wider student community.

Meanwhile, students deliver talks and training to GPs, speak on the television or radio, run advocacy projects for young disabled people, and actively campaign to support both the College, and other charities.

These gifts of time, energy and skill reflect our students' commitment to make a positive contribution to the College and the community which is helping them build their future.





Student Achievements cont'd...

“These gifts of time, energy and skill reflect our students’ commitment to make a positive contribution to the College and the community which is helping them build their future”.

Working

The development of ‘employability’ skills is a clear focus of the College curriculum through on-campus and external opportunities. Our realistic working environments range from maintenance, to working in the college shop, bar, library or bank. In addition, IT students run a working office developing learning resources, while performing arts students tour each year with the Everyman Theatre.

Students are also involved in a range of sustainable projects – such as a barbecue briquette recycling scheme. The College has also established an allotment, and is developing a horticulture and recycling area to provide work experience.

But perhaps one of the most successful recent ventures organised by College students was Employability+, a skills festival for employers and disabled adults. Students shared the planning, organisation and staffing – from marketing to car parking – and attracted more than 1,500 visitors and 80 exhibitors.

And the work-related experience is proving to be truly valuable as the College continues to seek out external opportunities for students, and to develop its enterprise learning activities. The number of College leavers moving into voluntary and paid work continues to increase.

Our Students

The exceptional nature of our students was once again demonstrated through many achievements of personal targets and ambitions, and through students working together to accomplish goals as a team both in the College and in the outside community.

Two of our students in particular, Harry Shenton and Richard Amos, had a lot to celebrate. Not only were Harry and Richard awarded their Duke of Edinburgh Gold Awards but also went on to be recognised in the National Union of Students’ Awards as Further Education Student Unionist of the Year and Student of the Year.

The College year culminates with a Student Awards ceremony at which we celebrate the outstanding individual achievements of our students and wish them well in their future beyond the College.

College Achievements... A year of achievement and excellence

It would be hard to miss some of the College's most tangible achievements this year. The new access road and car park, and the arrival of Gloucestershire's biggest wood chip boiler, for instance have had both a practical and physical impact on the site.

Others have been less visible – but have been no less transforming. And the difference they've made has been recognised and applauded both within, and outside the National Star College.

AoC Beacon Award for Lifelong Learning

More local disabled adults are in work - and less in day services in Gloucestershire. And that's due, in no small measure, to the College's highly-successful Adult Employability Framework - recognised and rewarded with the AoC Beacon Award for Lifelong Learning.

The Framework significantly improves employment outcomes for disabled people tackling issues such as employers' perceptions, and the provision of independent travel. It also focuses on preparing people for employment – and has initiated an employment programme related specifically to Gloucestershire day services.

The College was one of 23 winners of the UK-wide AoC Beacon Awards, which recognise excellence and innovation, and acknowledges the talents of staff in the further education sector.

LSC/BECTA Technology Exemplar

The development of enabling technology is key in helping our severely disabled students get the very most out of life. It's in recognition of our effective and innovative use of technology that the College received BECTA/LSC National Technology Exemplar Network status for a second consecutive year.

We were one of just 16 education and skills providers in England to be selected as an Exemplar; hailed for our use of mobile technology, gaming devices, and a range of access technology to promote greater autonomy in the way students learn, live and work.

Chief Executive/Principal Lifetime Achievement LSIS Star Award

In a career spanning almost three decades at the National Star College, our Chief Executive & Principal Helen Sexton has passionately championed disabled learners and staff.

Helen was the driving force behind the College's first vocational provision - significantly improving employment prospects for disabled people. Her focus on inclusive learning and equality has helped the College make significant progress in recruiting disabled employees and her groundbreaking thinking is at the heart of the College's innovative approach and long-term strategy.

Helen's STAR Award for Lifetime Achievement, from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, comes as she marks 9 years as Principal. Her leadership has seen the College grow and flourish, with exciting development plans for the future.

College Achievements...



Star Appeal development: Phase 2 completion

The shape of the College changed dramatically with a new access road and car park for staff and visitors, diverting traffic away from the main campus, and improving safety for students and staff.

Indoors, our swimming pool changing rooms were replaced by a bright, well-equipped changing village. With the focus on accessibility, the transformation included space for changing beds, specialist overhead tracking, private changing areas, showers and toilets – all designed to facilitate greater use of the pool by students, and community groups.

Changes were also afoot in the sports hall, where a storage area was converted to a large viewing gallery, providing a fantastic space for students to enjoy sport, and to motivate players and student spectators.

Meanwhile, a new cost-effective and environmentally-friendly Biomass wood chip boiler was installed to heat water for the whole campus. In addition, the wood chip is sourced from a local supplier – keeping our carbon footprint on the roads as small as possible.



Summary of financial activities for the year ended 31st July 2009

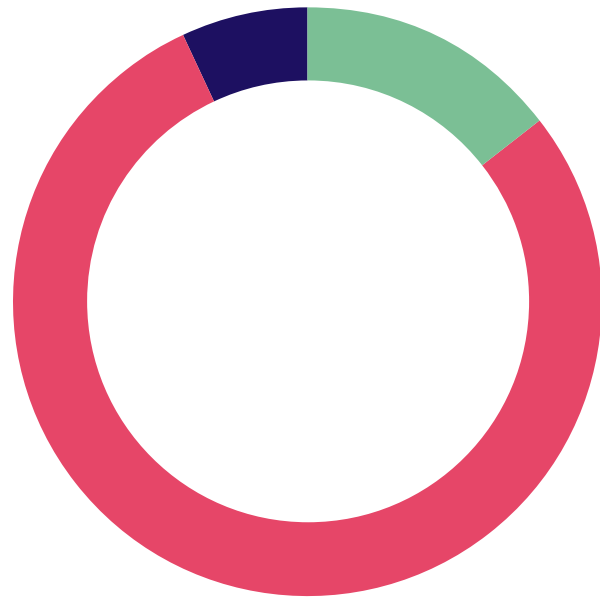
How is the National Star College funded?




Income through fundraising and other activities

The National Star College raises funds for vital facilities and equipment through charitable donations from individuals, trusts, companies and other organisations. This income enables the College to provide students with the facilities which are essential for them to be able to transform their lives during their time at the College.

Statutory income towards operating costs Our staff and operating costs are funded via statutory sources (mainly the Learning and Skills Council).

Fees paying for specific projects A variety of funders support the College's groundbreaking programme of projects for young and adult learners.



Statutory income towards operating costs £13,218,565	
Income through fundraising and other activities £2,459,166	
Fees paying for specific projects £1,124,811	



Summary of financial activities for the year ended 31st July 2009

How is the College's income spent?

Living at College Our students live in small communities where, supported by specialist staff, they are able to unlock their potential and build skills to live independently after College. Student residences are staffed 24 hours a day to assist with personal care and development, and staff also support student leisure activities.

Delivering education, work based learning and life skills training The College offers flexible learning programmes which match our students individual requirements, and every student is supported by a personal learning mentor. The College focuses on helping students develop the skills they need to take control of their lives and prepare themselves for adulthood.

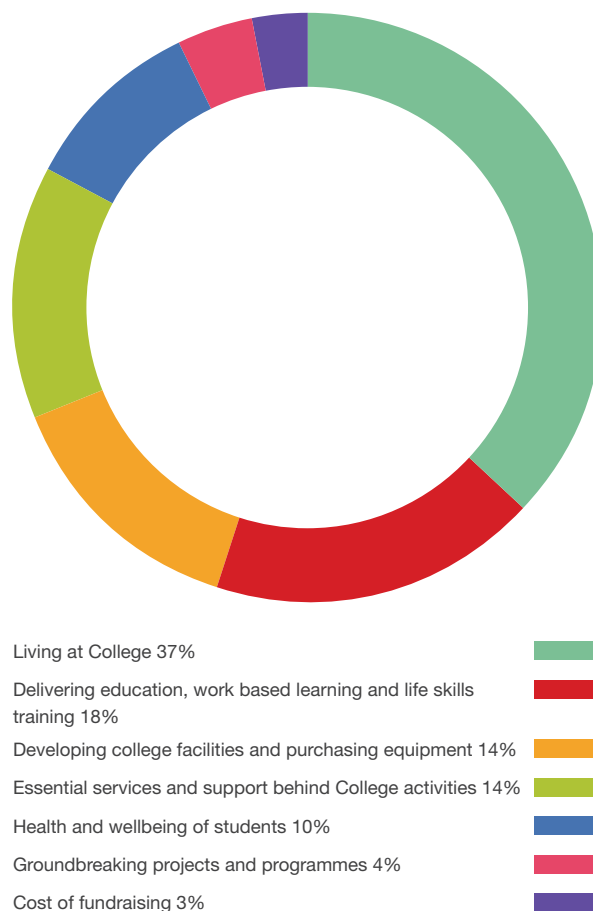
Developing College Facilities and purchasing equipment A programme of College Development ensures that our students have the facilities they need. The College provides state-of-the-art technology to develop our students mobility, communication and independence.

Essential services and support behind College activities A network of teams support the College's operational activities by providing services such as catering and transport for our students, and maintaining College facilities.

Health and wellbeing of students A healthy lifestyle is very important to our students, who participate in sports, swimming and other fitness activities, and benefit from a range of therapies which are integrated into their lifestyle and College programme. Specialist medical staff ensure the wellbeing of students at all times.

Groundbreaking projects and programmes The College runs a series of programmes for young and adult learners. Programmes include LIFT which helps people with learning difficulties and disabilities to use public transport (winner of a Guardian Public Service Award 2009) and Active Employability which equips learners with the necessary skills, knowledge and capabilities to achieve vocational qualifications.

Cost of fundraising The College raises funds to purchase essential equipment, develop facilities and run projects and programmes which would not otherwise be funded.



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 Dr S Burrows
 Mr Samuel Butler FRICS
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Dr K D Anderson CBE, BA, DipEd
 (until Sept 2008)
 Mr Shaun Parsons

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We are extremely grateful for the support of all the individuals, charitable trusts and organisations not listed above but who have devoted time, gifts and resources to supporting the National Star College.

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