



## The Kingston-upon-Hull Gold Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance



### **IAG Gold Standard assessment – St. Mary's Sports College, Hull**

External Assessment carried out on 25.09.2009

Assessor – Vince Barrett

#### **Overview**

St Mary's College is a large Roman Catholic Voluntary-Aided 11-19 Comprehensive School with Sports College Specialist Status. It also holds the Investors in People and Healthy Schools Awards and has International and Training School status. It has also been recently recognised as a Fair Trade school. The school is situated on a single site to the north of the city of Kingston-upon-Hull and accommodates approximately 1597 learners including a sixth form of 331. The school's intake is drawn principally from Catholic primary schools across the city of Hull but includes a significant number from Catholic schools in the neighbouring East Riding of Yorkshire. In recent years, the school has also welcomed incoming learners from overseas, especially Poland, for whom English is an additional language [EAL]. 36 different languages are spoken amongst the school's population and major steps, such as the introduction of an on-site Saturday Polish Community School have been taken to ensure that all may access the curriculum and associated information, advice and guidance. 50% of all learners are drawn from 20% of the wards deemed to be the most deprived in England and the number of learners with identified special educational needs is currently 175 on School Action, 58 on School Action Plus and 34 with a Statement of SEN. This broad catchment means that learners come from a very wide mix of social, cultural and economic backgrounds, resulting in a school population that is truly comprehensive.

#### **Assessment**

Prior to the formal assessment, the Hull Connexions IAG Development Manager, Annabel Brannan and IAG Development Adviser Barbara Foyston, worked closely with key personnel in the school, assisting in the compilation of a self-assessment form in preparation for external assessment. This, and an extremely detailed and thorough portfolio of evidence - containing substantial documentary representation of school IAG practice - were provided to the assessor prior to the date of assessment. The results of learner questionnaires and surveys were also included, evidencing feedback from learners and practitioners regarding the IAG systems in place (See Element 8.1).

The formal assessment procedure took a full day. The assessor was provided with a very detailed programme which included interviews with Ged Fitzpatrick, Headteacher; Damian Walmsley, Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral); Mary Keogh, Assistant Headteacher (IAG); Kevin Stork Co-ordinator (Careers Information, Advice, Support and Guidance Co-ordinator) and a cross section of the large number of the school community with an identified IAG role. I was also able to talk to a group of parents. During the assessment, the following activities were also undertaken: interviews with learners (randomly selected) and visual inspection of the facilities for provision of information, advice and guidance. All interviews and observations were later cross-referenced against the very detailed portfolio of evidence pre-submitted by the school. The relevant collected evidence demonstrating

each Element and Component of the Hull Gold Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance is described in summary 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, current and impartial information which meets all needs**

There is a large centrally-located Learning Resource Centre (LRC) to which all learners may have access before, during and after the working day. This facility is very well-stocked with reference materials, college and university prospectuses and course texts, as well as videos and DVDs and is set out in such a way that learners may easily find whatever information they are seeking. There is plenty of space for private study and there are sufficient computer workstations to allow free access without booking. There is also a dedicated careers information area where learners may research entry requirements and the necessary personal skills and training for a wide range of occupations. Librarian Alex Haswell is responsible for overseeing the LRC and she ensures that there is a broad range of appropriate up-to-date information on any aspect or issue affecting learners - personal, learning, progression or health and is on hand to assist learners. The LRC is open from 8.00 a.m. until 4.30 p.m. Monday to Friday.

The information held in the LRC is complemented by a separate Connexions room which is an additional source of general personal and career-related information within the school. It houses information on a variety of topics and is the base for Connexions (see Element 2.1). Information via national publications such as 'Which Way Now?', EMA packs, the local i4u Planner, and work-related learning materials are all used to support learners in planning their futures. The school's intranet is seen as an important means of communication and it has an up to date careers and IAG section. Regularly refreshed notice boards around the school are used to share information on a range of issues e.g. healthy eating, attendance, careers and lifestyle. Each year group has an assigned social area with a regularly updated notice board displaying careers, health and social information and a plasma screen monitor which relays news of school events or up-to-the-minute information of importance to learners. Plasma screens are also located at key points around the school campus. Any information that needs to be relayed to parents of eastern European learners is translated for them by the school.

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

All school and external IAG providers are familiar with the range, content and communication of the information as described in Element 1.1 above and support learners in gaining information appropriate to their needs. Careers Coordinator Kevin Stork and Assistant Head Mary Keogh attend relevant external training sessions and meetings and disseminate information as appropriate to IAG practitioners in school by way of tutor or multi-agency meetings.

The school has a large team of learning support staff and all interviewed as a part of this assessment process demonstrated clear understanding of the breadth and purpose of information available to learners. There are professional development opportunities for all 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.**

Connexions PAs, the school nurse and other external IAG professionals are all qualified in their particular fields and receive training through their employing organisations. The Heads of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 ensure that pastoral staff have the necessary skills and training to ensure high quality IAG provision. Communication between external and internal agencies is excellent due to the regular meetings and well-structured organisation of the pastoral team.

Connexions practitioners – Generic Personal Advisers Neeta Jain and Christine Burgess and Careers Personal Adviser Ray Simmons are based in the Connexions room and available to complement and support the work of the school's IAG team. The CIASG co-ordinator Kevin Stork works closely with the Connexions PAs to ensure that referrals are timely and appropriate. All three PAs report that they are made to feel very welcome in the school and work in partnership to offer impartial advice and guidance to learners – especially with regard to further learning or training post-16.

All members of the school staff and external guidance practitioners have CRB clearance.

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

Internal and external IAG practitioners working in the school 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 EMA, finance, accommodation or transition are addressed by the most appropriate practitioner. Mary Keogh, Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for IAG ensures clear communication systems are in place, resulting in a good understanding of the range of information, advice and guidance services and protocols in the school. Links between all services and agencies are clear to learners and they are encouraged to seek or are referred to any help they need via their tutor.

## **Element 3 – Linked IAG Provision**

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

Deputy Headteacher Damian Walmsley has the overall senior management responsibility for all aspects of information, advice and guidance provision in the school as described in Element 1.2 but all senior management team members play an active part in its maintenance and development. Key managers interviewed during this assessment were Damien Walmsley, (Deputy Head) Mary Keogh (Assistant Headteacher, IAG), Kevin Stork (CIASG Co-ordinator), Carmel Hardy (Head of Transition Year 6 into 7); Maria Bowers (Director of 6<sup>th</sup> form); Amanda Eaglen (SENCO); Jonathan Boden (Assistant Headteacher, Teaching and Learning), Emma Woolfall (Assistant Headteacher, Aim Higher) and Headteacher Ged Fitzpatrick. All clearly work together as a team to ensure that learners are supported into, through and beyond school learning. Given the huge range of learner need for information, advice and guidance among the school's diverse population, this ongoing attention to pastoral care is given a high priority.

## **Component 2: All IAG practitioners will make clear to learners the links between IAG services and support learners in their transition between these services**

As stated in Element 2.2, day-to-day communication between IAG practitioners is very good and there is in place an effective and supportive network that is able to respond quickly and appropriately to learners' needs. All school-based pastoral staff are familiar with internal and external agencies supporting young people and members of the Senior Leadership Team all share some responsibility for the co-ordination of personal, educational and vocational IAG, complemented by the team of learning support staff and personnel from external organisations such as Connexions. 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 to ensure that all learners' IAG needs are met. The co-ordinated roles of tutors, learning mentors and pastoral assistants (see Element 4.1) is also pivotal in linking available IAG services and the clear communication strategies and the close cohesion of working arrangements ensure links are clear and learners know to whom they can turn for help. This was borne out in conversations with learners during the assessment.

## **Component 3: All IAG practitioners will recognise professional boundaries and know which alternative provision is appropriate for signposting or referral to meet each learner's guidance needs**

The school has clear systems in place for the reporting of incidents, concerns and behaviour management. Staff use a system of 'yellow cards' which are issued to learners on the third occasion their behaviour falls below the high standard expected. Yellow card holders are removed from the lesson in which it was issued and the learner is passed on to the most appropriate team member for action which varies, depending on the nature of the issue. All issues and actions taken in response are logged and stored centrally. This whole-school approach ensures that any low level disruption, patterns of behaviour and recurring issues can be identified and action taken. This system has proved to be effective both in dealing with incidents and issues as they arise and also in helping pastoral staff to see 'the bigger picture' in order that effective IAG interventions and referrals can be made over a period of time if necessary.

All staff and learners consulted by the assessors were clear about these procedures and had confidence in the system. Where it is necessary to remove a learner for a period of time, they are referred to Jim Nicholson, Behaviour Manager, who has specific responsibility for working with those learners who can benefit from some time out for reflection. Individually-tailored learning programmes are put in place until the learner is ready to return to mainstream schooling or referred on to a specialist IAG practitioner. The Connexions Partnership Agreement also defines agreed procedures and practitioner and learner surveys have been carried out to check the effectiveness of the system. Clear data protection policies and protocols for referral are in place.

## **Element 4 - IAG Responsiveness to the needs of clients**

### **Component 1: IAG provision will promote equality of opportunity and access**

There is a co-ordinated system of support for all as described throughout Element 3 to ensure that all learners receive appropriate information, advice or guidance during their time at school. Every learner is allocated a personal tutor to whom they can refer for help and support with any aspect of their learning; most subject teachers are also personal tutors. Tutors track learners' attendance and achievement via the school's sophisticated Serco management information system.

There is very strong support for all learners with educational, physical or emotional support needs. Amanda Eaglen, SENCO, operates a system of diagnostic procedures for all learners on entry which is well established and comprehensive. The school also makes good use of Section 139A documentation provided via Connexions PAs in addition to using its own assessments to ensure that information held on all learners with any additional need is as up to date and complete as possible. As a result, all learners are provided with the necessary equipment, human or material resources to ensure that they can reap maximum benefit from their learning.

The team of 12 Learning Mentors - two per year group including 6<sup>th</sup> form - offer learners individual help with course and homework, organisation of tasks, time management and revision. In addition, they provide advice and guidance on personal issues which may be presenting barriers to learning such as poor attendance, behaviour, relationships or personal problems. Learning mentors work closely with tutors and Heads of Key Stages to identify issues with individual learners at an early stage. Learners can self-refer to learning mentors or be referred by members of staff. All practitioners are clear about what is available from IAG services and learners interviewed were all able to describe the systems for getting help.

**Component 2: IAG will be accessible to all, with specific resources directed to learners identified as having additional needs.**

St Mary's is a school founded on the Catholic ethos of care, nurture and spiritual growth. This is amply illustrated in the chaplaincy which is at the heart of IAG practice. Chaplain Chris Cuthill is on hand to offer guidance and support to all learners who are experiencing difficult or traumatic times and all learners may use the peaceful chapel, removed from the hurly-burly of school life, to reflect and take stock. The chapel is well used and respected and all learners are clear about its purpose. The Chaplain plays a key role in the life of the school. He has taken responsibility for arranging many trips to places of interest in the UK and abroad, is central to the organisation of fund-raising and charity events, supports the school's peer mentoring scheme and is involved in the anti-bullying chatroom. He also played a leading role in St Mary's becoming recognised as a Fair Trade School.

As detailed in Element 4.1 above, there is strong support available for all those with additional learning needs. Information regarding individuals is shared appropriately and within data protection legislation between practitioners and specific needs are addressed as they arise.

## **Element 5 - Quality and Delivery of IAG**

**Component 1: IAG will be underpinned by a development programme of planned personal learning based upon national recommendations**

This is a great strength of the school's IAG provision. There is a comprehensive tutorial programme, linked very closely to the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes and the full programme is extensive and prescribed, delivered by the tutorial team and designed to underpin the advice and guidance described in Elements 3.2 and 4.1. An important part of the tutorial programme is the issue of a Student Planner to every KS3 and KS4 learner which contains a wealth of information about who to contact in school should any problem or issue arise. Learners are expected to have their Planner with them at all times to record homework, meetings with their tutor, merits received and personal achievements. Parents are expected to sign the Planner every week.

At KS4, Learners are involved in the 'Passport to Success' scheme whereby they must demonstrate development of personal skills and attitudes - such as good attendance, timekeeping, determination and teamwork - that will be valuable to them in the workplace. Teachers and tutors issue Commendation stickers when positive attitudes and skills are demonstrated and if the learner collects sufficient of these in their Planner, there are tangible rewards at the end of Y10 and Y11 in the form of money off the price of the end of year trip or ticket for the school prom. Learners value this scheme and realise that the development and recognition of personal skills is important.

**Component 2: IAG will be targeted at the needs of learners and informed by social and economic priorities at local regional and national levels**

As stated in the overview to this report, St Mary's Sports College is situated in a city that has a high percentage of its wards ranked in the top 20% of the most deprived in England and Wales. The number of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C including maths and English languishes at or near the bottom of the national league GCSE attainment table with fewer than 30% (2008 figures) attaining the national benchmark. In contrast, 57% (2008) and 60% (2009) of St Mary's learners achieved this standard which bears testament to the quality of teaching and supporting IAG its broad range of learners receive. Most notably, the school had no 2009 leavers who were classified as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) against a local authority figure of 10.6% (2008). See also Element 6.2. As demonstrated throughout this report, the school is constantly aware of its responsibilities in meeting the support needs of all its learners.

**Element 6 - Impartiality of IAG Provision**

**Component 1: IAG will promote all available options based on the needs and circumstances of each individual**

There is no evidence of any coercion for learners to make particular choices at the end of Year 11. The East Riding and Hull electronic Area Wide Prospectus (AWP) ([www.logonmoveon.co.uk](http://www.logonmoveon.co.uk)) contains details of all courses and programmes available in all providers locally. All learners are encouraged to seek information via this facility and training in the use of this and the integrated common application process (CAP) has been undertaken by all IAG personnel in the school. Learners' training is built in to the tutorial programme. The school is one of the leading users in Hull of the common application process and is aiming for 100% usage by the current cohort of Year 11 learners, including those selecting courses in the sixth form at St Mary's. Year 11 learners interviewed were all aware of the AWP and said they are finding it very useful in researching options post Year 11.

As learners move through their courses, the tutorial system monitors attendance, punctuality and progress. Learning mentors and pastoral advisers provide additional support to assist individual learners in overcoming any barriers to learning they may be experiencing. Whenever deemed to be appropriate, this support can extend to home visits in order to work with and advise parents.

**Component 2: IAG will support learners in making informed decisions and not led by institutional targets or goals.**

Impartiality of information, advice and guidance, especially with regard to career and progression is seen to be very important. St Mary's College does not have any vested

interest in recruiting or retaining learners on post-16 courses or programmes that are not matched to their needs or ambitions.

The majority of the school's learners progress on to further study after Year 11 with about 80% progressing to AS Level study in the sixth form. These learners make their decisions based on consideration of all the options open to them and all interviewed were aware of what was available across the city and beyond. The remaining 20% of leavers move on to Apprenticeships, vocational learning or further academic study elsewhere. As reported in Element 5.2, the school had no 2009 leavers in the NEET category – a clear indication that IAG for transition is focused and appropriate.

About 85% of each Year 13 cohort progress on to higher education and so information and advice on options for HE is seen as important; support and guidance for applications through UCAS is consequently thorough. As mentioned above, IAG is offered to learners in line with their academic ability, career aspirations and interests. Information and advice on options for progression from all courses is impartial. The Connexions Humber 'Directions' guide is made available to all Y12 learners to help with decision-making on completion of courses.

## **Element 7 – IAG for Learning, Work and Progression**

**Component 1: IAG for learning, work and progression will support learners in exploring the implications of possible career choices when planning their futures.**

St Mary's offers a number of resources and activities to learners, designed to raise awareness of opportunities in further learning and work. It is expected that every learner will participate in work experience (see Element 7.2); all learners are encouraged to research all post-16 options and to visit local colleges' open days. The Consortium for Learning, representing work-based learning providers, supports learners wishing to progress on to Apprenticeships and there are Connexions Personal Advisers available in school to provide impartial careers guidance..

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

All Y10 learners undertake a two week period of work experience with local employers. Placements are arranged and allocated by Kerry Buck, Admin Support Assistant and overseen by Kevin Stork, CIASG Co-ordinator. Placements are matched as far as possible to learner ambitions and linked to learning at school.

As a part of the preparation for this, learners explore local and national labour market information (LMI) in order to gain an understanding of occupations which are expanding and those in decline. In addition, the school 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 encourage successful progression.

LMI is also available via Ray Simmons, the Careers PA in school who keeps up to date with local and national employment trends and is able to advise learners accordingly. Learners may also access LMI via the local website [www.lmihumber.co.uk](http://www.lmihumber.co.uk) and work-related courses offered by the school such as Young Apprenticeships and BTEC Nationals with work placement time also offer significant and current LMI to learners. In every Year Group Social Area, there are posters and statistics regarding the local and national labour market.

**Component 3: IAG provision will ensure that all learners have access to the information they need to make informed choices**

The school makes good use of the national 'Which Way Now?' information and the local 'i4u Planner' so that learners fully understand the nature of the four available routes after Year 11 and as indicated in Element 6.1, learners are also encouraged to use the [www.logonmoveon.co.uk](http://www.logonmoveon.co.uk) Area Wide Prospectus to research courses and providers.

The school has listed all its post-16 course provision in the Prospectus and is able to receive applications via the inbuilt common application process (CAP) from any prospective learners.

**Element 8 – Evaluation of IAG**

**Component 1: All IAG practitioners and learners are able to feed back their views on the provision within the organisation**

The learner voice is deemed to be very important at St Mary's and learners may offer suggestions for improvement, complaints or complimentary comments regarding any aspect of school life, including IAG provision, via tutors, learning mentors or members of the School Council. There is also the opportunity for learners to evaluate IAG provision specifically through questionnaires and the internal email system offers learners a medium to feed back any views they have on IAG provision.

External IAG providers also have ample opportunity to feed back their views to senior managers through the regular multi-agency meetings and tutors via tutorial meetings. As a result, the IAG policies, procedures and provision are under constant review and are continuously developing. Learners interviewed demonstrated good knowledge of the variety of support they are offered in and expressed satisfaction with the help available to them.

**Recommendation**

Having spent a full day in the school, interviewing, questioning and observing - in addition to consideration of the huge amount of submitted paper evidence supporting the quality of IAG, I have no reservation in recommending that St Mary's Sports College should be awarded the Kingston-upon-Hull Gold Standard Award for IAG.

Vince Barrett  
External Gold Standard Assessor

Date of report: 02.10.09

Date of recommendation:

Date of Award:

Date for re-assessment: September 2012