

**Inspection of the learning community
surrounding Alva Academy
Clackmannanshire Council
5 November 2013**

1. Context

Community Learning and Development (CLD) partners within the area of Alva Academy were inspected by Education Scotland during September 2013. During the visit Education Scotland staff talked to children, young people and adults. We worked closely with local CLD managers, CLD providers, partners, paid staff and volunteers. We wanted to find out how well partners are improving the life chances of people living in the community through learning, building stronger more resilient communities and improving the quality of services and provision. We also looked at how well, paid staff and volunteers are developing their own practices and how well partners, including schools are working together.

2. How well are partners improving learning, increasing life chances, promoting and securing wellbeing?

The learning community around, and including, Alva Academy addresses some of the learning needs of its locality through limited examples of partnership working. It is not yet fully utilising the collective strengths, intelligence and resources of all institutions, public, private and voluntary services, and community groups. There are individual institutional examples of success. For example, most young people, including those with additional support needs achieve well at secondary school. The work with adult learners is limited, inconsistent and is too isolated from other learning activities. This learning community is beginning to address issues of social inclusion, regeneration and economic development. This work is at the early stages of development and the impacts are not yet fully understood by all partners. As a result, the partners do not yet make a full contribution towards the achievement of the nine key aims of the Clackmannanshire Community Plan.

Partners in the learning community actively promote wellbeing. Volunteer levels are rising and a wide range of community organisations deliver services in sports. Young people in the local secondary school raise significant funds for national charities and these have been increasing over the last three years. Partners in sports development activities deliver an increasing range of programmes from early years onwards. This programme is linked to well-attended sports development activities in all local primary schools, for example over 600 primary age children attended a 'cross country' race. Young people engage actively in a wide range of healthy activities for young people in secondary school that includes after school clubs. Alva Academy has schools of rugby, football and dance to allow a few young people to develop their skills in specialist sports and arts pathways. A few young people demonstrate a range of significant achievements in a number of sports areas such as the Special Olympics and Under 17 Bowling. Work to increase road safety for young drivers is effective and has led to a notable decline in road accidents in the area. Women's Aid works closely with the school to address the prioritised area of healthy relationships and domestic abuse through learning programmes and specialised support. Community organisations such as the Ochil's Leisure Enterprise, the Ochil's Landscape Partnership and the Tillicoultry Action Group now deliver a range of health related activities. However, while sports related activities are recording participation, there is a need now to focus upon the analysis of participation and relate this to impacts for participants, particularly for adults.

Overall, insufficient information on trends in participation is available and this significantly impairs partners abilities to deliver effectively. While community organisations now provide facilities, much of their work is still at an early stage of development and is not yet demonstrating clear impacts. The partners should build upon the work done in sports and the environment to develop a wider range of activities to support wellbeing. Significant health issues relating to the most vulnerable groups, teenage pregnancy and substance misuse require to be addressed better by partners.

Some of the partners in the learning community are improving learning and are able to demonstrate this. Partners in the formal education sector are making increasing use of Curriculum for Excellence to provide a common approach to achievement. Partners use a range of effective approaches to support transitions from primary school and into employment, especially for the most vulnerable young people. This is an effective focus that ensures that almost all young people successfully progress to a positive destination. While there are examples of successful achievement for most young people in the secondary school, this is still inconsistent across the partnership. Further work to support young people who are leaving the youth justice system and re-entering the community is required. There is not yet a joined up approach to delivering, recording and measuring achievement by young people. This means partners are not able to demonstrate a comprehensive picture of achievement across the whole learning community. Community organisations are at too early a stage of development to be able to capture the impacts of their work in terms of learning and skills development. Adults who participate in courses on information and communication technology successfully increase their confidence and gain new skills as a result of their learning. However, this area of work in adult learning is too isolated and in most towns in the learning community, the opportunities for adults to achieve through learning are significantly under-developed, under-promoted and are unsatisfactory.

Some of the partners in the learning community improve life chances and are able to demonstrate this using data and evidence from trend analysis. Attainment in the secondary school is above comparator and national averages. The number of young people successfully undertaking achievement awards and engaging in Activity Agreements is increasing. Whilst this is a positive picture, the school is presently delivering this without the full support of the learning community partners and awareness of this achievement is not yet fully understood by partners. Partners in the learning community have considerable headroom for improvement in family learning to support improvements in literacy, numeracy and other subject areas. This would enable the school to improve further life chances and increase understanding of its contribution to the key outcomes of the Clackmannanshire Community Plan. Partners need to make use of their comprehensive understanding on the ways that they could improve life chances for adults. Whilst community organisations are starting to deliver health related programmes, they are doing this without guidance and with insufficient links being made to the key priorities of the Clackmannanshire Community Plan. This is a missed opportunity.

3. How well are partners working together and improving the quality of services and provision?

CLD staff now make increasing use of management information systems to plan and record their work. This is a welcome development and they should continue to build upon and refine their approaches in this respect. Partners recognise that further work on agreeing a shared vision for the provision and delivery of services is needed, but this has not yet begun. The partnerships in the Alva Academy Learning Community are not fully developed at this point in time. Partners have not yet established a clear sense of identity and purpose. Partners do not have sufficient professional relationships. As a result, partners have limited knowledge of each other's services and their potential contribution. Partners should increase the opportunity for joint training and networking. Reporting of progress to wider stakeholders is inconsistent. Partnership working lacks dialogue and is not allowing sufficient opportunities to share resources. Partners are not being guided by the shared outcomes of the Clackmannanshire Community Plan. As a result, too many partners do not recognise their key role and collective responsibility to contribute to a number of targets in the Clackmannanshire Community Plan or recognise their ability to contribute to the achievement of these outcomes. Partners do not have a strategic plan for adult learning at present. This is a development priority to be addressed urgently. Young people in schools and community organisations are not yet sufficiently recognised as full partners within the learning community.

The learning community partnership is not making effective use of available intelligence in the sharing of information. They also need to recognise that it is important to be able to demonstrate the impact of their work, both as a provider in their own right and through working in partnership with others. Partners should now begin to develop approaches to joint self-evaluation across the school and learning community. The CLD service has considerable headroom for improvement with regards to self-evaluation activities. Partners do not yet have a systematic regular approach to self-evaluation that is focused upon impacts and gathering evidence to support and develop performance. Partners do not yet have a calendar of regular self-evaluation activity across the learning community partnership. Learners and other stakeholders are not yet involved in self-evaluation activity. All of these are significant weaknesses. Partners now need to be able to form a coherent view of the provision across the learning community.

This inspection of learning and development in the learning community surrounding Alva Academy found the following key strengths.

- The dedication and commitment of local people as volunteers.
- Local community organisations who are starting to deliver new services.
- Environmental activities in the area that capitalise on natural assets.
- Opportunities for young people of secondary age in learning, volunteering and wider achievement.

We discussed with partners how they might continue to improve their work. This is what we agreed with them.

- Further build on partnership working to improve collaboration across the learning community and outcomes for young people.
- Expand and develop adult learning provision in the learning community.
- Develop comprehensive and consistent approaches to measure and record wider achievement.
- Expand and develop further approaches to health and wellbeing activities.
- Provide support and greater recognition to community based organisations.

4. What happens at the end of the inspection?

There are significant improvements needed and partners do not yet have a good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. Our Area Lead Officer along with the education authority will discuss the most appropriate support in order to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will revisit the learning community to check on progress within one year of publication of this report.

Phil Denning
HM Inspector
5 November 2013

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for this learning community can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/othersectors/communitylearninganddevelopment/AlvaAcademyLC.asp>.

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