



**A report by HM Inspectors**

**Inspection of the learning community  
surrounding Alva Academy  
Clackmannanshire Council  
25 November 2014**

We published a report on the learning community surrounding Alva Academy in November 2013. That report set out key strengths of the learning community and areas for improvement.

This continuing engagement report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in October 2014. It tells you about improvement since the original inspection in the quality of learning opportunities provided. It also comments on how providers are getting on with the main points for action. We describe how learners are doing and how good the learning community is at helping them to learn. We comment on how well staff, learners and groups work together and the difference they are making in the learning community. Finally, we focus on how well the learning community is led and how leaders help the learning community achieve its aims.

If you would like to learn more about our original inspection of the learning community, please visit:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/othersectors/index.asp>

You will also find a report on the secondary school.

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## **1. The learning community**

The learning community around Alva Academy includes the towns of Tillicoultry, Menstrie, Alva and surrounding villages. Since the original inspection in 2013, a shared services arrangement is now established between Clackmannanshire and Stirling Councils. As a result, there are now new arrangements in place for the management of community learning and development (CLD) staff.

## **2. Particular strengths of the learning community**

- Improving partnership working.
- Improving range of opportunities for young people to achieve and increase life chances.

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

Partners now increasingly and effectively address the needs of the learning community. There are now better opportunities for young people to gain accreditation through Sports Leader, Youth Achievement and Saltire awards. Young people successfully improve their confidence and self-esteem through groups such as the Awards 4U group at *Ben Cleuch Centre* and the *Junior Challenge*. CLD staff and partner agencies now work more collaboratively and effectively with Alva Academy. There are some positive signs that earlier intervention is leading to positive outcomes for young people, for example reductions in substance misuse and less referrals to the Children's Panel. There is now scope for closer liaison with local primary schools to assess the impact of groups such as the Junior Challenge. Good numbers of young people now participate in rugby and other sports. More young people successfully progress into club rugby as a result of Sports Development staff working with Alva Academy. However, further work by partners to gauge the impact of sport on young people's health and wellbeing would be beneficial.

There is now an increased focus on digital inclusion. Through the *Work Club* a few unemployed adults now progress to further learning, volunteering and employment. The *Cross-Skills* group helps to tackle social isolation. For example, older people acquire new skills and are now able to use social media. The *Young Parents* project increasingly helps participants develop life skills, supporting them to plan for independent living. Parenting strategies such as *Incredible Years* also help to increase confidence. English Speakers of Other Languages learners have increased their use of information and communications technology to progress their learning. Gaelic language classes help a few adults to develop skills and move on to other opportunities. Partners now need to work better together to identify adult learning needs and respond appropriately.

There is now an increased and welcome focus on improving health and wellbeing. *The Health Spot* at Alva Academy supports young people well to deal with issues of smoking, sexual health and bullying. Issues related to teenage pregnancy are starting to be identified through the *Family Nurse Partnership*. The *Young Parents* project continues to support young women experiencing teenage pregnancy although numbers across Clackmannanshire remain high. *The Keep Well* project is now beginning to address long term health issues although it is not yet possible to assess the impact of this work. There is potential to establish a health and wellbeing group at a local level that could complement the work being done by schools.

Partners have more to do in terms of developing consistent approaches to measuring and recording achievement. There is not yet a clear picture of trends across the learning community. Improved management information systems are still required to better demonstrate outcomes and share intelligence. The STACKS website is an encouraging development across Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils although this is at an early stage.

There is now an improved picture of partnership working across the learning community. Community based organisations are now securing support from a range of partners to develop constitutions, support management committees and gain charitable status. The *Mother and Toddlers* group has now extended its provision into a youth club and offers opportunities to gain a range of youth achievement awards. Providers such as the Western Dollarbeg farm who deliver Activity Agreements are now extending their provision to better meet the needs of young people. However, there are further opportunities for groups to come together to learn from each other and share resources.

#### **4. How well are partners working together and improving the quality of services and provision?**

Professional relationships across the learning community are improving. Partners are now sharing more and working better together. Clackmannanshire Youth Services operational plan helpfully identifies priorities for work with young people. Targets are now being set which reflect priorities in the Single Outcome Agreement are much more linked to Curriculum for Excellence. Youth Services staff now focus more on improving outcomes for young people. The partnership agreement between CLD and Alva Academy is an encouraging development. However, self-evaluation across partners is not yet well-established. There is scope for partners to agree and implement a shared vision for the learning community. Young people would benefit from being included in this.

## **5. Does the learning community have a clear sense of direction?**

The learning community is beginning to demonstrate a clearer sense of direction although there is more work to do. Partners now collaborate more effectively and trust is evident. Some partnerships are beginning to deliver good outcomes for learners. However, there is potential to build on this positive picture. A multi-agency group that planned together would help to ensure continuity of provision.

## **6. What happens next?**

Although there have been important improvements, partners need to do more to have a good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. We will revisit the learning community within one year of publication of this report to check on progress. Our Area Lead Officer will also maintain contact with the education authority to discuss the most appropriate support in order to build capacity.

Sheila Brown  
HM Inspector  
25 November 2014

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> .

If you would like to receive this report in a different format, for example, in a translation you can contact the administration team on 01506 600381.

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