

**Learning community inspection
Continuing engagement**



A report by HM Inspectors

**Inspection of the learning community
surrounding Alva Academy,
Clackmannanshire Council
5 July 2016**

HM Inspectors from Education Scotland (ES) joined staff from Clackmannanshire Council and its partners to work with them on a validated self-evaluation (VSE) of Alva Learning Community as part of their on-going improvement activity. This VSE was part of a series of 'try-outs', with the ability to use this approach as an alternative to a continuing inspection in the learning community. Prior to the VSE the Area Lead Officer (ALO) and other HM Inspectors worked closely with the authority to agree the parameters of the VSE visit that took place in October 2015.

In discussion with the HM Inspectors, the authority identified the following quality indicators and themes from the draft *How Good is the Learning and Development in our Community* as the focus of the VSE:

5.1 Delivering the learning offer with learners:

- The extent to which the learning offer is well planned and tailored to identified need; and
- Recognises and celebrates achievement and attainment.

8.1 Partnership working:

- Sharing of skills, knowledge and experience across partners to improve outcomes; and
- Joint planning and evaluation which ensures the partnership adds value.

The VSE team consisted of staff from Youth Services, Adult Learning, schools, voluntary sector and other local authority departments. They were supported and challenged by two HM Inspectors from Education Scotland and two Associate Assessors.

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

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/LCAIvaAcademyIns051113_tcm4-818477.pdf

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

Planning the learning offer with learners and targeting individual and group needs is improving. Some partners are using and reviewing Individual and Group Learning Plans and targeting provision for example English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), literacies and work with young people with additional support needs. However, these approaches are not consistent and Community Learning and Development (CLD) partners could better plan with learners, set and review targets and share progress. Achievement and attainment for young people and adults are recognised and celebrated through the use of achievement awards and celebration events such as the ESOL and Youth Services annual awards. However, this could be extended and embedded across partnership provision. A focus on the learning offer for adults and communities, accreditation and celebration by partners is also required.

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

Inspectors found some examples of joint planning and evaluation amongst partners, some of which have a partnership agreements in place such as Youth Services and Alva Academy. The use of *Getting it right for every child* (GIRFEC) as an approach by the Young Parents Project and Family Nurse Partnership, and the multi-agency screening group is also adding value to partnerships. However, this is not consistent and improved methods for the sharing of skills, knowledge and experience across the partnership is required. This would be further supported by the development of local profiles, informed by local and national data, ensuring best use of partnership resources.

Workforce development is starting to improve but there is more to do. Some youth workers feel very well supported and trained and are using learning to improve practice through the Personal Development Award in Youth Work. There is scope to focus on a strategic approach to workforce development which is informed by need.

Managers and team leaders agreed enthusiastically to participate in the 'try out' VSE. Team leaders showed knowledge of intended approach and commitment to the process. However, further support from managers, staff teams and partners during the VSE week would have helped the authority gain more from the VSE. Although, a few partners were involved, they would have benefitted further from actively leading on aspects of the VSE. This would have also assisted with triangulation of evidence. Clearer guidance from Education Scotland at the start of the process on expected level of partner involvement and roles would have also helped.

3. Do the learning communities have a clear sense of direction?

Whilst HM Inspectors recognised that some progress had been made, self-evaluation across CLD is not yet embedded in practice. For example, there are some early signs of planning for improvement through the development of the partnership CLD three year plan. However, many partners were unclear about their role, expected outcomes for learners and how these would be demonstrated. This requires focussed attention.

4. What happens next?

Whilst HM Inspectors recognise the progress made, more needs to be done. HM Inspectors are not yet confident that self-evaluation and planning is robust enough. As a result we will return to the authority in late 2016 to conduct further evaluative activity.

Ann Kivlin
HM Inspector
5 July 2016

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