

Claverham Community College (Community Education)

Focused monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 50112

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Last day of inspection: 5 October 2011

Type of provider: External institute

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Claverham Community College, in Battle, East Sussex, comprises a comprehensive school, a youth club, a workplace nursery, an adult education department and a sports centre.

Claverham Community Education Department (CCED) delivers the adult provision. Classes take place at the college and at one community venue. CCED has a contract with the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) for the provision of learning for qualifications and family learning. All the provision for social and personal development is subcontracted to CCED by a nearby college of further education. Nearly all learners are aged 19 or over. In 2010/11 there were 742 learners, with 586 of these on courses for social and personal development and the remainder on courses leading to qualifications.

The previous inspection, in February 2010, judged the overall effectiveness of provision to be satisfactory, as were outcomes for learners, the quality of provision, leadership and management, the capacity to improve, safeguarding arrangements and equality and diversity. Learning for qualifications provision in languages, literature and culture was judged to be good and provision for learning for social and personal development, in arts, media and publishing, was satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What is the extent of progress in addressing the underdeveloped aspects of quality improvement, noted at the previous inspection?

Reasonable progress

CCED has worked hard and effectively to improve the rigour and impact of quality assurance arrangements. The previous inspection noted, in particular, the need to monitor the quality of lesson planning more effectively and improve the use and verification of individual learning plans. A good start has been made towards these ends, although more work is to be done.

Significant further change to quality improvement arrangements is to take place, as CCED responds to the requirements of its lead contracting college.

CCED has taken a broad approach to quality improvement, embracing more than lesson planning and individual learning plans. Quality improvement arrangements have been re-modelled. Self-assessment is now integrated with strategic plan targets, with one set of action plans for improvement, and the quality improvement framework is now reinforced by a calendar of quality assurance events.

Managers are now more proactive in what they require from tutors. Tutors must maintain standard course documentation, including lesson plans and individual learning plans, which are subject to administrative checks and to qualitative checks by managers, for example through tutor performance reviews. CCED requires tutors to evaluate their own performance for a course of study and pursue action plans for improvement.

Arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning continue to be sound.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has CCED made in improving learners' outcomes since the previous inspection?

Reasonable progress

Outcomes for learners were satisfactory at the previous inspection. Success rates were high for learners on courses leading to qualifications and satisfactory, overall, for learners on courses for social and personal development.

Since the previous inspection, CCED has made good progress in improving the success of learners on courses for social and personal development. Overall success, pass and retention rates are all high. The success rate has improved from 87% in 2008/09 to 98% in 2010/11.

However, the overall success rate for the much smaller number of qualification courses has fallen from 80% in 2008/09 to 69% in 2009/10, but with the beginnings of recovery, to 70%, in 2010/11. Pass rates are consistently high. The decline in performance was due to poorer retention, largely in modern foreign languages, when learners chose to leave their courses early, without taking final examinations. CCED has tackled this issue by introducing more flexible arrangements for testing, enabling learners to take tests earlier, and by introducing tests emphasising speaking, as preferred by many advanced learners. It is too early to judge the impact of these measures.

Learners continue to make good progress and enjoy their studies. Most achieve their own personal learning goals. Attendance rates have improved since the previous inspection.

Quality of provision

What progress has CCED made in improving the quality and use of individual learning plans, particularly in provision for social and personal development?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, the quality and effective use of individual learning plans varied significantly between courses for qualifications and non-qualification courses. Since then, managers have introduced the moderation of learning plans. This has highlighted areas for improvement for a few tutors and/or the need for changes to learning plan documentation. Course file audits now ensure that learning plans are

completed and managers' systematic review of all course files includes the quality of individual learning plans.

All tutors now give learners the opportunity to indicate their personal goals at the start of their courses, regardless of the length of course. However, too many individual learning plans fail to record the expected course or qualification outcomes. Some of the personal goals stated by learners are insufficiently clear, making it difficult to determine what would constitute success.

CCED knows that further work is required to improve the use of individual learning plans. Some tutors use them well to help recognise and measure the extent of progress made by individual learners. However, this better practice has yet to be developed into a more consistent approach across the whole provision. Learners recognise improvements with the format and use of individual learning plans, but feel that they are insufficiently used throughout their courses.

What progress has CCED made in ensuring the consistent use of high quality lesson planning to improve teaching and learning further? Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, although teaching and learning were good, the effective use of lesson planning varied too much. Since then, CCED has continued to improve the planning of lessons and their quality. The CCED scheme for the observation of teaching and learning shows an increase in good or better teaching, with none that is inadequate.

The latest quality improvement plan and the current teaching and learning training plan show a clear commitment to improving lesson planning. The adult education manager has recently introduced a system of individual tutor reviews, used to set targets and plan for improvements, even for tutors whose lessons have been graded good or better. Audits of course files ensure that all tutors now submit schemes of work and lesson plans at the start of their courses, enabling early checks on their quality, with clear action plans for improvement where they are needed. Examples of good schemes of work and lesson plans are highlighted by managers to share best practice.

Overall, however, tutors' lesson plans continue to be too generic, do not recognise clearly individual learners' starting points, and contain limited challenge for more able learners.

Leadership and management

What progress has CCED made in identifying local needs for adult learning and in developing sustainable community partnerships to widen opportunities for participation, and support social cohesion? **Insufficient progress**

At the previous inspection, partnerships to offer learners a broader curriculum and to support improved social cohesion were insufficiently developed. Post inspection, the adult education manager has continued to pursue opportunities to widen provision with a range of community and business groups. This has led to a small number of additional courses being delivered, both on and off campus. However, in reality, little sustainable development comes from such activities and many programmed courses are cancelled due to lack of enrolments. Learner numbers continue to decrease year on year.

The strategic plan states clearly the need to broaden the offer to the wider community. However, it lacks clarity on where efforts should be focused and on priorities for partnerships. Targets are in place to increase learner numbers, although how these targets will be achieved is insufficiently clear.

Given current financial constraints, links with other providers to develop a broader and more secure course offer, sharing resources effectively, are insufficiently developed. CCED is seeking to develop some aspects of joint provision with a nearby community college.

What progress has CCED made in improving and strengthening curriculum leadership? **Reasonable progress**

The previous inspection noted that programme arrangements were well managed, but that CCED needed to develop its capacity for curriculum leadership.

Post inspection, CCED took steps to address this. In conjunction with its college partner, it determined to designate subject tutor leads, some of whom would be jointly resourced. However, management changes at the college prevented this strategy being furthered. Given this, and their current reduced funding, CCED has successfully pursued alternative approaches to improving and strengthening curriculum leadership.

As part of the enhanced programme for quality improvement, the adult education manager has provided greater direction and management of subject areas and their tutors. This has been particularly marked in modern foreign languages, where learners' success rates had fallen for key courses. The more interventionist approach to management, combined with more rigorous quality management, and the greater team work of tutors themselves, has provided clearer direction and shape to the curriculum.

Additionally, CCED has made good use of the expertise of teachers in the school. For example, the head of languages has advised on curriculum and has quality assured adult tutors' work. CCED intends to extend this aspect of support.

CCED has a new coordinator in post for provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enabling the development and expansion of this area of work. It continues in its efforts to appoint subject leaders from its pool of existing tutors.

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