

Milton Keynes Christian Foundation

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Focused Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

Milton Keynes Christian Foundation (MKCF) is a registered charity based in Wolverton. It holds a contract with the Young People's Learning Agency to provide Foundation Learning. This constitutes 30% of the provider's work. MKCF develops the vocational skills of its learners through 10 social enterprise projects in waste recycling, community cafés, urban food growing, childcare, construction, graphic design, motor vehicle, and hospitality and events management. It works with young people aged 14 to 16 who are not in mainstream education, pregnant teenagers and young homeless people.

Since the last inspection in November 2009, the numbers of learners on Foundation Learning courses has almost doubled. MKCF has extended the range of projects to include catering facilities, motor vehicle and construction training. Although the number of staff directly involved in delivering training has increased from 21 to 32, only a third of the current staff were involved in the last inspection.

At the last inspection, MKCF was judged satisfactory for overall effectiveness, outcomes for learners, leadership and management including safeguarding, equality and diversity and for the provision in preparation for life and work. The quality of provision was good. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

<p>What progress has MKCF made in maintaining an effective self-assessment process and in improvement planning to maintain its strengths and deal with the areas for improvement?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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Following the last inspection, MKCF has further strengthened the use of learners' views to make improvements to the provision. The self-assessment process is now used as an essential tool for service delivery and development. For example, MKCF used the Investor in People framework to evaluate the impact of its training on the learners. Although the self-assessment report is evaluative and accurate, it does not use all the available evidence to demonstrate the impact of MKCF's provision on the learners. All staff and the board of trustees make a valuable contribution to the process and the report. However, MKCF does not seek views of its partners and stakeholders on its performance and how it could improve its services further.

Managers have produced an extensive quality improvement plan. They have focused significantly on the strengths and have not prioritised the critical aspects of improvement. For example, teaching and learning do not feature in the quality improvement plan, although MKCF has improved the learning and staff resources. MKCF has made significant progress against two of the themes explored during this visit, reasonable progress against three themes and insufficient progress against

improvements to the progress reviews. It has satisfactory capacity to maintain and improve standards despite significant staff changes.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has MKCF made in improving the outcomes for all learners? **Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection, the rates of progression into further education, training and employment were satisfactory. Many learners left the programme early and their attendance was low.

The progression rates are now good. So far, 61% of the leavers in 2010/11 have progressed into further education, employment or apprenticeship. A good proportion of them achieves a full or partial Open College Network (OCN) qualification. Learners thoroughly enjoy learning skills such as hospitality, childcare, construction and motor vehicle maintenance. Their confidence, self-esteem and employability skills have developed well. Learners have raised their aspirations and value the importance of qualifications in their lives. Teenage parents develop strong parenting skills as well as qualifications. Learners continue to make an outstanding contribution to the community through valuable community projects. The achievement of personal objectives remains satisfactory. Learners' attendance has not improved significantly as the learners are not set personal objectives to improve it. Learners are developing the functional skills of literacy, mathematics and information and communication technology satisfactorily. However, the achievement of qualifications remains low. Learners leaving the programme early gain good vocational skills and satisfactory levels of partial qualifications. The provider has strong plans to strengthen the pre-enrolment stages to screen, motivate and support learners.

Quality of provision

What progress has MKCF made to provide a consistently good standard of progress reviews for learners? **Insufficient progress**

At the last inspection, progress reviews were not carried out to a consistent standard. They were mainly pastoral in nature. Many reviews did not have specific and measurable short-term targets.

Although MKCF has provided significant training to the staff on conducting and recording effective progress reviews with their learners, the quality of these reviews remains poor. Most of the review records do not have sufficiently detailed targets for the learners. Not all reviews take place as planned. Reviews are partial and incomplete. The vocational tutors conducting the reviews do not link the various strands of a learner's training to produce an overall record of learners' progress. Despite stronger pastoral support, learners do not have sufficient understanding of what they need to do to make better progress, particularly in functional skills.

To rectify this matter, MKCF has detailed plans to centralise all progress reviews and has developed a strong system to monitor their quality. The recently appointed coordinator plans to harmonise the reporting of different aspects of learners'

training, improve the quality of reviews and increase the frequency of reviews to ensure that all learners make better progress.

What progress has MKCF made in improving and monitoring the quality of teaching, training and learning? **Reasonable progress**

Although the quality of teaching was good in 2009, it had a number of areas for improvement. The quality monitoring systems were not sufficiently thorough and the lesson observations had few actions for improvement.

Following the last inspection, MKCF has successfully dealt with most of the less effective aspects of teaching. The quality and range of resources are significantly improved. Staff and learners make effective use of the greater number of computers and the internet café. All learners enjoy working from graded, comprehensive workbooks in each vocational area, regardless of their ability and level. These improve their understanding of the topics such as construction, motor vehicle and mathematics. Staff have benefited from extensive training that has enhanced their knowledge and skills to improve the quality of training and learning.

MKCF has extended the formal observations to include observations of induction, assessment, progress reviews and teaching and learning. However, managers do not grade the observations. They focus strongly on the staff input and their performance rather than on learning. MKCF is not fully aware of the quality of its training in various vocational areas and in the functional skills. Many observations do not contain action plans for staff to improve further.

Leadership and management

What progress has MKCF made in ensuring that the board members make a greater contribution to monitoring learners' progress and safeguarding vulnerable learners? **Significant progress**

At the last inspection, the board of trustees fulfilled its statutory duties and focused on financial aspects, paying little attention to the learners' progress or to updating safeguarding policies.

The board of trustees has responded well and quickly to the need to understand the training process and the outcomes for its learners. The trustees now take a keen interest in the learning of its learners and in the board's safeguarding responsibilities. The agendas for the board meetings are comprehensive. Trustees seek regular and timely reports on learners' outcomes and progress, equality of opportunity, safeguarding and health and safety. The board has rewritten the safeguarding policy and developed a formal schedule of review. The meetings are now more interesting and lead to highly effective discussions. The board is well aware of the critical link between the learners' outcomes and the provider's financial position. It sets challenging targets to the managers and monitors their performance closely. The board is aware of, and concerned about, the lack of progress concerning the quality of learners' progress reviews and has set demanding targets for improvement. The

board has approved the increase in the number of staff in order to enhance learners' experience and to improve learners' progress and the support MKCF provides.

What progress has MKCF made in further developing the use of management information to improve the provision? **Significant progress**

At the last inspection, the system and processes for collecting management information, including data, were ineffective. The data system had limited use to the provider as most of the learner-related information was not easily recordable and accessible.

MKCF has purchased a more versatile data system. This has enabled staff to input data and retrieve it more easily. They receive meaningful reports on a regular basis on attendance, at risk learners and achievement of qualifications. Staff use the readily available and accurate data to monitor retention rates more closely, provide more effective and timely support for at risk learners and to follow up learners with poor attendance. As a result of the clear management information, MKCF has reviewed and strengthened various processes such as induction, progress reviews and learner recruitment to improve the learners' experience. This has enhanced the provider's capacity to make further improvements.

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