

Learning community inspection



A report by HM Inspectorate of Education

**Inspection of the learning community
surrounding Dumbarton Academy
West Dunbartonshire Council
27 October 2009**

We inspect learning communities in order to let those who use services and the local community know whether learning communities provide appropriate learning opportunities and help learners in their development. We are also interested in how community and voluntary groups are helped to contribute to making communities better places to live and work. At the end of inspections, we agree ways in which staff and volunteers can improve the quality of learning for young people and adults and how the impact of community and voluntary groups can be further developed.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask managers and staff about the strengths of the learning community, what needs to improve, and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan what we are going to look at. During the inspection, we join other activities which young people, adults and community groups are involved in. We also gather the views of learners, active community members and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them together with the other information we have collected to arrive at our view of the quality of provision locally.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of learning and development provided. We describe how well 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 inspection of the learning community, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the learning community and, in many instances, a report on the secondary school closest to the learning community.

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1. The learning community

The learning community around Dumbarton Academy includes the town of Dumbarton with a population of 20,458. The town is also served by a denominational secondary school, Our Lady and St. Patrick's High School. According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation there are three areas of Dumbarton which are ranked in the top 5% most deprived communities. At one time a centre for distilling, shipbuilding and glassmaking, Dumbarton is now more of a commuter town for those who work in Glasgow and the surrounding area.

2. Particular strengths of the learning community

- Very positive relationships between staff, learners and volunteers.
- Transitions between community-based adult learning and further education are managed with sensitivity.
- Very positive outcomes for learners.
- Effective use of data to target some services.
- Good range of accredited programmes for all learners.

3. Examples of good practice

- *Youth Build Project* – an employment and training programme to provide young people (16-24) with apprenticeships in the building industry.
- *Mobile Information and Cyber Station* – drop-in information and advice service.
- *Work Connect* – project supporting people with learning disabilities and mental health issues into employment.
- *Phoenix Environmental Garden Project* – young peoples' project to develop a piece of wasteland into a community garden.
- *Alternatives Dawn/Rise & Calm Programmes* – support to adults to reduce and recover from addictions.

By visiting www.hmie.gov.uk you can find out more about these examples of good practice.

4. How well do participants learn and achieve?

Evaluative information available from activities, groups and organisations effectively demonstrates the number of learners in Community Learning and Development (CLD) programmes. This information is not currently used across all partner agencies to identify trends over time, or to demonstrate the outcomes of their work. However, systems have been established and are beginning to be implemented to enable this to happen within the Community Learning & Development Section (CLDS). The *Youth Outreach* Partners use information on local youth crime and anti-social behaviour 'hot spots' to more effectively target outreach programmes. Adults and young people in the area benefit from high quality learning activities. Learner achievement is recognised through the annual Adult Learning Certificate presentation event. This is valued by all participants.

Young people

Participants' learning and achievement is very good. There is a very good range of programmes, activities and opportunities many targeted at specific vulnerable or disadvantaged young people. Almost all young people are attaining, achieving and progressing as a result of their participation in programmes and projects. All members of the *Big Wide Forum* are taking part in Youth Achievement Awards and Millennium Volunteers Awards. A large number of young people across the learning community are undertaking The Duke of Edinburgh Award. Success is celebrated within individual projects.

Relationships between staff and young people are very positive. Most young people feel safe and secure when taking part in activities and their confidence in dealing with issues and working with others has improved. Youth Action groups are supporting young people in making a positive change in how they are seen in their local communities. Driving theory courses delivered by CLDS are being used to improve participants' literacy skills as well as providing them with information about safe driving. This has helped them to gain employment, qualifications and make plans for their future.

The *Youth Build Project*, an employment and training programme funded by *Inspiring Scotland*, run by *Action for Children* and supported by the CLDS Community Literacy and Numeracy Team, delivers accredited training to young people who are not in education, training or employment. This, along with improved literacy, numeracy and interview skills, is increasing their chances of employment.

A group of partners, including CLDS, *Y-Sort-it*, (a youth organisation), Clydebank College and the Outdoor Education Department organised the summer holiday programme. The residential programme brought together young people from existing youth groups to break down territorial barriers. The programme gives young people confidence to speak to others from different areas. As a result of this work a new approach to the delivery of youth work by CLDS is being implemented.

Adults

The impact of adult learning is very good. There is evidence of outcomes and impact for participants across a broad range of learning programmes. Learners in all of the projects visited are progressing. Almost all learners identified an increase in confidence that helped them to be more comfortable in everyday situations.

In the CLDS English for Speakers of other Languages Group learners, are more confident in a range of situations such as looking for accommodation, dealing with housing applications and bank forms. Learners are more confident and comfortable in work situations and in social situations. The *Recognising Numbers Group* supports learners to become more independent. Some participants now go shopping, can identify the cost of items and use the correct money to purchase items. Others are able to travel independently on public transport.

The *Work Connect Project* supports people with learning disabilities and mental ill-health into paid employment through individual support to the employee and the employer. Of the ten participants employed in seasonal work with Land Services, four have moved on to full-time employment.

The partnership with the college has positive outcomes for learners. Clydebank College Dumbarton Campus is a new facility that offers a range of subjects. There is a service level agreement in place with CLDS, and partners support a wide range of learners to progress to college-based learning. The CLDS *Adult Literacy and Numeracy* Group is working towards SQA level 2, 3, 4 in Working with Others and the *West End Project* participants are working on SQA access level 2 in woodwork. Other learners have progressed to gain qualifications in computing, art and languages. All learners' are more confident about accessing further education as a result of their experiences.

5. How well does CLD help the community to develop?

Overall community groups are very well supported and those involved are skilled and confident. Young people and adults are active and influential at local level, however, new community planning structures are being set up and community groups are unsure of their role in the new structures.

Youth Action Groups are helping to improve the image of young people in the local community. The CLDS *Bellsmyre Youth Action Group* has carried out two projects to show that young people can have a positive impact on their community. A bingo evening and a 'hot water bottle' giveaway resulted in 200 residents receiving a hot water bottle to help keep them warm in the winter. The project has broken down barriers between young people and older people in the area. Almost all young people involved have gained improved communication skills, and confidence. Young people in the *Phoenix Youth Group Environmental Project* were supported by CLDS to carry out a community consultation in the Castlehill area to identify local support for a community garden. In addition to developing skills in planning, consultation and evaluation, young people have

increased their confidence and believe that they can bring about positive change within their community.

Training for the Pupil Council in Dumbarton Academy has been delivered by CLDS. Young people have gained skills in committee processes, managing meetings, decision making and working as a team. The allocation of £1000 to the Pupil Council by the Headteacher is a public acknowledgement of the importance of the voice of young people in the school. Council members are listened to and empowered to make decisions. The training has assisted the council members to more effectively represent young peoples' views.

The *Manage Your Pain Group* has developed sufficient confidence to become a very active self-programming group. They now require minimal support from CLDS Community Development Team staff. The members of the *Manage Your Pain Group* have a wide network of connections through members' other voluntary groups including the *Disability Access Project*, the Community Planning Partnership Community Forum, Elderly Forum, *Museums Project*, Writers' Group or as a *Digital Friend* volunteer. In the *Working & Learning Together (WALT)* funded pilot *Community Work Training Course Group*, local volunteers are about to complete a 40 hour course. All participants have learned new skills and gained a better understanding of the processes involved in working with groups. The course has had an impact on all their lives, challenging them and giving them a sense of significant personal achievement. The high level of support from the course tutors was identified as key to their success. All participants have increased their involvement in their communities as a result of attending the course.

6. How effective are providers in improving the quality of services?

All partners gather feedback from participants and undertake planning and monitoring and evaluation. There are no arrangements in place for this information to be consistently shared across partners. CLDS self-evaluation processes have recently been reviewed and changes implemented. Young people and adults involved in CLDS activities undertake regular processes of self-evaluation which helps them to review their learning and identify targets. There are some good examples of joint planning including the Steps to Financial Fitness Course which was identified by the Carers Centre, set up by CLDS and delivered by Clydebank College. All partners should now work together to evaluate their combined impact, and monitor progress towards their agreed targets. Partners should also consider the development of effective methods for reporting progress to all stakeholders, including participants.

7. Does the learning community have a clear sense of direction?

The CLDS understands itself and the area well and delivers effective services. There are clear links from the National Performance Framework through the Single Outcome Agreement to service, team and individual work plans. Management Information Systems are about to become operational to support

service improvement and there is a clearer focus on planning and reflective practice. New community planning arrangements are not yet in place and partners need to ensure this does not restrict the development of more systematic joint planning in the meantime. All partners need to continue to work towards a collective vision and direction for the learning community.

8. What happens next?

There are some important improvements needed, but because CLD providers have a good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement, and communities are achieving well, we have ended the inspection process at this stage. We will monitor progress through our regular contact with the education authority.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the education authority and its partners.

- Wider partner involvement in the planning and evaluation of local learning strategies, priorities and programmes.
- More effective sharing of data across the learning community partnerships.
- Broaden the range of methods used to report to stakeholders.

Quality indicators help CLD providers and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of the school. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publication *“How good is our community learning and development? 2”*.

HMIE checks five important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish CLD provision is doing. Here are the results for the learning community surrounding Dumbarton Academy.

Improvements in performance	satisfactory
Impact on young people	very good
Impact on adults	very good
Impact of capacity building on communities	very good
Improving services	satisfactory

Managing Inspector: Ros Sutherland
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This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors.

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

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