

Developing the delivery of English and maths

Supported provider: Kirklees College

Improvement partner: Gail Lydon

Introduction

About Kirklees College

Kirklees College came into being in August 2008 through a merger between Dewsbury College and Huddersfield Technical College. It supports areas of significant deprivation with more than half of its learners coming from disadvantaged areas. Based in the heart of Yorkshire, the College has a number of centres across Kirklees serving the local population, communities and businesses. It is now one of the biggest Colleges in the country. The College's mission statement is, "Creating opportunity, changing lives".

What we wanted to achieve

During the inspection in April 2011 we achieved a grade 4 for overall effectiveness of provision. Ofsted did recognise early shoots of improvement but it was too early to see impact. The following quotes from our inspection report capture our starting point.

Key people involved in the development

- Director of Curriculum: Sandra Burnhill
- Head of Skills for Life: Clare Farmer
- Curriculum Team Leaders for English and Maths: Jo Huszcza, Carole McKinnney and Matthew Knight
- Teacher Development Manager: Philippa Firth

"Key skills success rates have been improving, but from a very low base. Significant variations between different areas and levels were still apparent in 2009-2010, with rates well below national averages at intermediate level. The College has adapted provision so that students now follow functional skills courses. It is too early to see the impact of this change."

"Current development of students' literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory and reasonable progress is being made against the College's clear Skills for Life (SfL) strategy."

Ofsted 2011

Implementation

Planning our approach

Kirklees College tackled the highlighted weaknesses head on. This included fully utilising the LSIS support available. For example as part of the Support for SfL/English, Maths and ESOL programme challenging CPD sessions were arranged for staff at all levels to highlight the impact of not supporting all learners to develop their English and maths skills. A number of key documents were developed and communicated to all staff in order to develop a whole organisational approach.

What we did

We developed three key College documents to drive improvements in Skills for Life.

1. Skills for Life Strategy: A whole organisational approach
2. English and Maths policy
3. Vision for Learning: A strategy for teaching and learning

The purpose of the three documents are summarised below.

1. Skills for Life Strategy: A whole organisational approach

- Identifies how the mission and key strategic objectives will be fulfilled.
- Identifies how the needs of the local, regional and national priorities will be met by working with a range of partners, including employers, local community groups and the local authority, taking into account Skills for Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency recommendations.
- Embeds SfL at every level within the organisation, it is driven from the top.
- Sets clear targets for improvement monitored through performance monitoring meetings and Heads of Department taking ownership of their SfL targets. The Director also attends the performance monitoring meetings.
- During 2012-2013 two strategy groups to drive strategy forward have been established, with one focussing on student achievement and opportunity and the second on staff and up skilling workforce.

2. English and Maths policy

- Aims to improve the quality and consistency of English and maths delivery and maximise learner success rates.
- Sets clear targets for success rates.
- Clearly identifies roles/responsibilities within quality assurance (QA) framework.
- Clearly identifies expectations of qualifications required to deliver English and maths.
- 16 –18 full time learners and apprentices: entitlement to develop English and maths skills up to Level 2, and now embedded in Study Programmes.
- 19+ learners: opportunity to develop English and maths appropriate to their personal and programme needs.

3. Vision for Learning (VfL): A strategy for teaching and learning

This strategy provides clear information and guidance to encourage innovation and enable improvement. There are eight core aims, linked to the strategic objectives, which inform the operation of key quality processes. Aim 2.7 stipulates:

Continue to embed Skills for Life within the curriculum so that it is blended into all curriculum areas, all courses and every lesson.

- 'every lesson is an English and maths lesson'
 - continue to embed functional skills in teaching, learning and assessment; and
 - ensure all staff take responsibility for checking students' work for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Outcomes and impacts

What we achieved

Key aspects of our journey

The following list identifies key aspects of the journey we undertook. You can find more details of this journey in Kirklees College's earlier case study: Supporting staff to teach functional English and maths which is on the [Excellence Gateway](#).

- Up skilling of the workforce included a requirement for all teaching staff to have Level 2 equivalent in English and maths.
- Offering support to all staff in their English and maths skills through the personal development review (PDR) process.
- Level 3 qualifications in Teaching Functional Skills in either English or maths developed and delivered in house for vocational staff delivering functional skills.
- Development of the level five with Huddersfield University for specialist teaching staff of English and maths, with an increased focus on embedding English and maths.
- Focussing on the right course for the learner, which has led to the development of progression pathways

Preparation for Inspection

The preparation for inspection left no stone unturned. The key messages to staff were as follows.

- Embedding of English and maths should be seen throughout every lesson; 'Every lesson is an English and maths lesson.'
- Raise awareness of the importance of English and maths with all staff including subcontractors. The impact of changes in the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) were made explicit to staff.
- Data, data, data! For example three-year trend information was used to monitor and control.

Preparation for Inspection

There have been some changes in the Common Inspection Framework in the topics of 'Outcomes for Learners' and 'Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment', highlighted below. These helped inform our inspection preparations.

'Outcomes for Learners'

Inspectors consider the development of English, mathematics and functional skills required to complete learners' programmes and progress. Ofsted also comment on success rates in functional skills in the report at College level, and in each subject area inspected.

'Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment'

Common Inspection Framework extracts	Our interpretation
<i>...teaching and learning develop English, mathematics and functional skills, and support the achievement of learning goals and career aims.</i>	Lesson observations will include standalone observations and the development of English and maths in every lesson observed in all areas being inspected. Themed walk throughs may well cover this too.
<i>...learners appreciate the importance of improving their English, mathematics and functional skills as appropriate, in the context of their learning goals and life ambitions.</i>	The importance of evidencing the learner voice.
<i>...learners' progress in literacy, numeracy, language and functional skills is monitored and reviewed, and their work is marked carefully.</i>	Reviewing e-ILPs, setting and reviewing of SMART targets and marking of work.

What we learned

The Ofsted experience: November 2012

Our inspection took place in November 2012. The following are key learning points arising from the inspection in relation to Skills for Life, English and maths and functional skills.

- **Outcomes for Learners:** there was an emphasis on functional skills and GCSEs.
- **Teaching, learning and assessment:** English and maths was observed by curriculum area inspectors.
- **Learner voice:** was pursued in every lesson observed in addition to meetings with learners.

We also noted that:

- there were comments in the teaching, learning and assessment overall section of the report and for each area inspected;
- at least one standalone SfL lesson was observed in every area;
- judgements were made on the development of English and maths in all lessons observed: the focus was on vocational relevance; and
- assessed work was judged on marking for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The outcome of the inspection overall was “Good”, but we are not yet an outstanding provider because:

- “learners’ success in functional skills in English and mathematics is good overall; the proportion of students gaining high grades in English at GCSE is too low”; and
- “teachers do not always mark spelling and punctuation well enough to help learners improve their literacy.”

Advice to others

Do

- Work towards a whole organisational approach; English and maths is everyone’s responsibility.
- Support staff to deliver English and maths effectively by up skilling them. This includes subcontractors.
- Make every lesson an English and maths lesson.

Don’t

- Try to rush it. It takes time and different departments may need to take different approaches. Kirklees College has an ongoing plan to continually develop their provision.
- Make excuses!

Contact information

Date published: June 2013

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