

**Inspection of the learning community
surrounding Tarbert Academy
Argyll and Bute Council
18 December 2012**

1. Context

Community and Learning Development (CLD) partners within the area of Tarbert Academy were inspected by Education Scotland during October 2012. The Tarbert Academy Learning Community covers a large rurality-isolated area located at the top of the Kintyre peninsula. The Tarbert area is part of the Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands community planning area. This area is classified by Argyll and Bute Council as 'very remote rural'. Tarbert has a variety of small shops and services, but many advice and information services and employment and learning opportunities are located in the two larger towns of Campbeltown and Lochgilphead, which have their own secondary schools.

During the visit Education Scotland staff talked to children, young people and adults. We worked closely with local CLD managers, CLD providers, partners, paid staff and volunteers. We wanted to find out how well partners are improving the life chances of people living in the community through learning, building stronger more resilient communities and improving the quality of services and provision. We also looked at how well paid staff and volunteers are developing their own practices and how well partners, including schools are working together. The partners asked the inspection team to look at areas that they had identified as good practice in:

- Community-led learning;
- School-community links and partnerships; and
- Provision that enhances 'confidence and wellbeing'.

In addition there was a focus on the data and the needs around employability and family learning.

The inspection team were able to rely upon a self-evaluation document prepared by the council. This document drew upon the four key themes of the Argyll and Bute Community Plan prepared by the Community Planning Partnership as it relates to the Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands area. The Community Plan is organised around four key themes.

- Economy
- Environment
- Social Affairs
- Third Sector and communities

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

The Argyll and Bute Community Plan seeks to develop a skilled and competitive workforce and to support people to have active, healthier and independent lives free from discrimination. Tarbert Academy learning community enjoys a skilled and competitive workforce. Very good use is made of well-established formal and informal local networks. By the end of S6, young people's performance shows an improving trend of attainment. There are well-developed schemes to recognise achievement by young people aged between 16 and 18. The numbers of young

people who progress to further learning and employment are improving. Strong relationships exist between employability organisations which very effectively support youth employment. They actively share information and intelligence that identifies and supports early intervention with vulnerable young people. Effective networks support a wide range of employment experiences and volunteering activities. An extensive range of active schools sports opportunities supports health and wellbeing and provides entry into employment, for example, work with local golf or sailing clubs. There is scope to develop additional monitoring and support networks for 16-19 year-olds in transition from school.

Almost all people are active, healthy and independent. The community of Tarbert is characterised by a wide range of progressive, ambitious community organisations. The sector leading activities of these groups have used their own income streams and also attracted significant funding to develop a range of high quality learning resources, community services and amenities. Community organisations such as the Harbour Trust provide accessible and free opportunities to residents to further improve their health and wellbeing through innovative community led projects such as town paths and a free outdoor gym. Community organisations provide almost all of the community events. The funds being brought into the community by local organisations is increasing. These funds are well used to support the viability of the community and provide a good quality of life.

The Argyll and Bute Community Plan seeks to support and sustain the natural environment. In the Tarbert community, a number of effective and innovative volunteer led community projects with an environmental focus, such as the Tarbert and *Skipness Community Trust*, also support the school curriculum well. These include support for English, drama and social studies delivered in partnership with the *Tarbert Castle* project in primary and secondary. Links between managing environmental resources, social subjects and biology in the design and development of the *Tarbert Academy Wildlife Initiative* path and the *Healing Hands community garden* are highly effective. Increasing links between health services and the *Healing Hands garden* are supporting people with health issues to work in the garden as part of their recovery process. A few young people have developed boatbuilding skills in the Tarbert Skiff boat. These approaches allow young people to effectively broaden their experience of curriculum subjects and apply their skills in a community setting. There is room to further explore how young people's work to support the environment can be recognised using award programmes.

The Argyll and Bute Community Plan seeks to tackle discrimination, protect and support vulnerable children and families. Partners in the Tarbert area are working well to tackle discrimination. Members of the People and Agencies Coming Together group for adults with learning disabilities learn important life skills in independent living, and act as effective advocates for others with learning disabilities by proactively challenging attitudes. Previously excluded adult literacy learners have gained new life skills. As a result they are better able to support family learning, achieve personal goals, and are actively engaged in community organisations. A few young people regularly design eye-catching information boards and logos for community projects and the health and wellbeing network. However, there is no agreed family learning plan for Tarbert. This limits preventative approaches. Lack of available transport is a significant barrier to participation and, in some instances,

limits programmes of activity. There is potential to develop a community-led solution. The use of digital technology could be developed to improve access to learning and provide important social networking contact for those unable to access community facilities.

The Argyll and Bute Community Plan seeks to work with third sector organisations and communities to improve local access to support, training and to be fully engaged in influencing service delivery. Community groups have highly skilled, committed leaders. These groups have developed new resources and community events such as the well attended Seafood Festival and Music Festivals. Extensive and productive networks exist between organisations. There are equitable and cooperative relationships between organisations and individuals. There is very effective training and support for community organisations. A number of effective and innovative volunteer led community projects support the school curriculum from 3-18. The school works actively to support third sector organisations in their engagement with the curriculum and to support bids for external funding. There is scope to improve opportunities for local people to inform and influence the design of public services. While many community groups have active members, more structured approaches to involve young people are needed. A holistic approach to record, promote and celebrate community and individual achievement could be developed.

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

The Argyll and Bute Community Plan seeks to engage with partners and communities to deliver best value services. Partners are actively and effectively working to develop this. Community partners have developed a number of projects that are seeking to re-direct public sector investment and encourage sustainability. For example, partners developed a Tarbert Community Plan and initiatives such as *Big Green Tarbert* and the *Kintyre Orchard*. These projects have extensive data relating to their income trends. Successful partnership working with local schools and Argyll Colleges has enabled the school to offer additional opportunities for national qualification courses at S4 and S5 and additional qualifications. As a result of this partnership working, learners' experiences and the development of important skills for learning, life and work are significantly enhanced. Partners are just beginning to develop training programmes and shared approaches to community engagement that will build upon their partnership working. A holistic approach to gathering quantitative data to highlight key trends of the Tarbert community over time should be developed. A variety of institutions, public, private, voluntary services, and community groups could work together to measure collective performance against key Community Plan aims, targets and objectives.

This inspection of CLD in the learning community surrounding Tarbert Academy found the following key strengths.

- Active and highly motivated community members from all ages who contribute positively to community life in Tarbert.
- Well focused working partnerships that deliver elements of the four key themes of the Argyll and Bute Community Plan in the community of Tarbert.
- A diverse range of skills in economic development, learning and care that are applied to the benefit of the community.
- An ethos of achievement across the community.

We discussed with partners how they might continue to improve their work. This is what we agreed with them.

- Further develop their collective approaches to joint training and self-approaches.
- Develop and deliver more family learning programmes.

4. What happens at the end of the inspection?

There are some improvements needed, but because partners 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 local authority. Our Area Lead Officer along with the education authority will discuss the most appropriate support in order to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress.

Philip Denning
HM Inspector
18 December 2012

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for this learning community can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/othersectors/communitylearninganddevelopment/TarbertAcademyLearningCommunity.asp>.

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