

## Learning community inspection



**A report by HM Inspectorate of Education**

**Inspection of the learning community  
surrounding Charleston Academy  
The Highland Council  
15 June 2010**

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](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

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## **1. The learning community**

The learning community around Charleston Academy includes the west side of Inverness to the north of the Caledonian Canal and the rural area of Aird and Loch Ness, including the town of Beaully. The area has a population of around 11,600. Agriculture and tourism provides around a third of the employment in the rural area and the public sector accounts for nearly two thirds of the employment in the city area. The area is close to the average for Highland Council in most of the indicators of deprivation. However, there is one very small area of severe deprivation in the east of the city ward. The main community facility in the area is the Charleston Community Complex which, with Charleston Academy and the Highland Football Academy, provides a significant community campus for the local and wider area.

## **2. Particular strengths of the learning community**

- Schools that are active in their communities and contribute well to community development.
- High levels of volunteering that make a significant impact on the quality of life.
- Adult learning provision that improves the health, wellbeing and employability of adults who are furthest from the labour market.
- Effective arrangements to support a range of groups, including disability groups, in the arts, sports and traditional music.

## **3. How well do participants learn and achieve?**

A few aspects of local provision are of a high quality. High numbers of young people benefit well from uniformed youth organisations. The Inverness Sea Scouts have made 120 awards for skills in water sports in the last year and young people are proud of their achievements. Significant numbers of young people at Charleston Academy have achieved John Muir Awards, The Duke of Edinburgh Awards and SQA qualifications in community involvement. HM Inspectors, with senior officers, had previously identified, systemic difficulties in the Highland Council concerning improvements in performance in community learning and development (CLD). As a result, this inspection did not investigate this aspect of their management arrangements further. Senior officers accept the need for this to be improved.

## **Young people**

Young people in local uniformed organisations are well motivated by skills awards and develop confidence and a wide range of personal, social and vocational skills. Inverness Sea Scouts provides rich learning experiences for some 120 young people. As well as skills awards in water sports, many young people achieve first aid and health and safety certificates. Young people develop a range of important personal qualities that help to prepare them for life and work. Young people are well supported by the local authority to develop skills in sports, traditional music, drama and dance. All young people in the area have access to a wide and effective range of personal development opportunities through Charleston Academy. Some of these activities are delivered in partnership with community learning staff. Staff need to ensure that provision is developed at the Charleston Complex and in Beauly to better meet the needs of young people in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*. Primary headteachers are enthusiastic about pursuing the use of Dynamic Youth Awards as part of transition programmes to secondary school. Community learning staff are well placed to assist with this.

## **Adults**

Learners and potential learners have a limited range of learning opportunities available to them. As a result, too few adults are accessing learning opportunities. They receive little or no information, advice or guidance on these opportunities. A few participants from the area are accessing learning opportunities for those who are furthest from the labour market. Adults with literacy and numeracy needs, adults with mental health difficulties and ex-offenders are achieving and attaining in safe and supportive settings. They gain confidence and increase their self esteem through learning activities and projects. Some of these learners progress into further education, training, employment or volunteering. Inward migrants are well supported by effective provision for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Learners are developing their language skills to support everyday living. As a result, they are able to access services in the community and become more active citizens. Programmes of activities with the over fifties result in improved physical health and mental wellbeing. Learning provision in relation to parenting, family learning or other support to parents or carers is lacking in the area.

## **4. How well are communities developing and achieving?**

The community benefits from volunteer-run leisure and social activities which contribute well to the health and wellbeing of participants. Community Councils are effectively empowered through local members and a council officer to represent their areas and address some local priorities. Local schools are contributing well to CLD, including capacity building, in the area. The Council for Voluntary Service Inverness (CVSI) provides capacity building support for groups across the wider Inverness area which includes the Charleston learning community. The communities in the area would benefit from more systematic local planning arrangements to further build the capacity of community groups. Communities would also benefit from support to local volunteers to develop their

roles in identifying and addressing local priorities. Such support would enable active community members to set and evaluate outcomes, provide a wider range of learning activities and recognise their achievements. Service managers and staff need to ensure that the community complex, working in partnership with the school, delivers more effective outcomes for young people and adult learners.

#### **5. How effective are providers in improving the quality of services?**

The area has not been well served by changes and vacancies in the youth development officer post. A period of stability and effective management is required to build more effective youth work provision by the local authority. The Sea Scouts manage a very effective provision in the area and are keen to work with schools and others to make full use of their facilities and expertise. Arrangements for planning within the Integrated Learning Community are not in place. Schools work very well together to improve services, and engage partners well in ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people. However, there is no systematic planning to ensure effective provision of adult learning or the further development of the considerable capacity in the local community.

#### **6. Does the learning community have a clear sense of direction?**

Highland Council continues to have a number of systemic issues that need to be addressed to improve CLD. The Council has devised a helpful action plan which has the potential to improve CLD. In particular, the Council is committed to reviewing the operations of Associated Schools Groups and Integrated Learning Communities. This has the potential to simplify local planning arrangements, improve partnership working, and take an asset-based and inclusive approach to building community capacity. The Council should now take this forward as a matter of urgency.

#### **7. What happens next?**

There are significant improvements needed and CLD providers do not yet have a good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. We will therefore revisit the learning community to check on progress within one year of publication of this report.

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

- Take forward the Council's action plan to resolve the systemic issues that hinder progress in improving CLD outcomes.
- Ensure that the Charleston Community Complex, working in partnership with Charleston Academy, delivers more effective outcomes for young people and adult learners.

- Increase the overall provision across the area for young people and adult learners, including learning support for parents and carers.

Quality indicators help CLD providers and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the learning community. 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 Charleston Academy.

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>weak</b>
<b>Impact on young people</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>
<b>Impact on adults</b>	<b>weak</b>
<b>Impact of capacity building on communities</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>
<b>Improving services</b>	<b>weak</b>

**Managing Inspector:** Jim Rooney  
15 June 2010

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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