

IAG Gold Standard Assessment – Sir Henry Cooper School

External Assessment carried out on 11.12.2008

Assessors – Vince Barrett and Maureen Kelham

Overview

Sir Henry Cooper School is a smaller than average mixed secondary school situated on a large housing estate to the north of the city of Hull. It serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage; the number of learners eligible for free school meals is twice the national figure and a high proportion of learners have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many families living on the estate experience long periods of - or successive generational unemployment, resulting in low levels of aspiration and expectation. Working closely with families and raising aspiration is consequently seen as a high priority. The school is designated a National Challenge School as GCSE attainment of A*-C in English and maths falls below the national benchmark of 30%. However, the school has been recognised as the most improved in the city of Hull 2006-2008 and this, together with excellent contextual value added outcomes and the low numbers of young people leaving the school who are Not In Education, Employment or Training (NEET) - are demonstrators of its success.

The school's provision includes two off-site Learner Support Centres – Orchard Park Community Centre and St Michael's - and the school is host to one of the two City Learning Centres. There are currently 580 learners on roll and the school is awaiting a new build under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

Assessment

Prior to the formal assessment, the Connexions Curriculum Adviser for Hull, Annabel Brannan, worked closely with key personnel in the school, assisting in the compilation of a detailed self-assessment form in preparation for external assessment. A portfolio of evidence containing documentary representation of the school's IAG practice was provided to the assessors prior to the date of assessment.

The formal assessment procedure took a full day. The assessors were provided with a programme which included interviews with a deputy headteacher, a range of teachers, Directors of Achievement, Directors of Learning, key IAG personnel and a group of learners. Anne Stagg, Director of Learning for Guidance, has responsibility for the co-ordination of all information, advice and guidance provision. During the assessment, a visual inspection of the available facilities for provision of IAG was also undertaken. All interviews and observations were later cross-referenced against the portfolio of paper evidence pre-submitted by the school.

Element 1: Accessible and visible information

Component 1: There will be one or more information areas, open at clearly displayed times, accessible to all learners and providing a range of appropriate, current and impartial information which meets all needs.

All learners have access to a centrally-located Connexions room which houses a wide range of information on careers, general and sexual health, nutrition and a variety of other topics. A bank of computers ensures access to web-based information including up-to-date labour market information (www.lmihumber.co.uk), the careers and personal development programme Fast Tomato (www.fasttomato.com) and the Area Prospectus (www.learnhull.co.uk). Connexions Personal Advisers, school Learning Achievement support staff and the school nurse use rooms off the main teaching space for private interviews; together they offer a lunchtime drop-in session once a week. Other materials are distributed to Year Areas or directly to learners. National publications such as 'Which Way Now?', the local i4u Planner, EMA packs and work-related learning materials are all used to support learners. The school's intranet is seen as a useful means of communication and messages are sent to learners to highlight upcoming events or topics, the recent careers fair being an example. Useful websites are listed as 'favourites'.

Component 2: All staff involved in providing information will be familiar with its content and purpose

All school and external IAG providers are familiar with the range and content of the information as described in 1.1 above and support learners in gaining information appropriate to their needs. Any suggestions for improvement are passed to Anne Stagg for consideration; she also monitors the quality of delivery of tutor- led lessons.

Element 2: Accessible advice and guidance

Component 1: Internal and external advice and guidance practitioners will collectively possess the necessary skills, knowledge, training and qualifications to identify and respond to each learner's needs.

Connexions staff, the school nurse and other external IAG professionals all receive training by their employing organisations. Anne Stagg facilitates training for school staff and regularly attends sessions on economic and personal well-being and the termly update meetings held for all IAG co-ordinators. She has recently undertaken training in use of the Area Prospectus.

Teachers can make learner referrals as and when necessary and PAs have regular formal and informal meetings to share information with school staff. Learners are given introductory talks by professionally-qualified Connexions advisers and invited to access help whenever it is required. Day-to-day communication between school and external advice and guidance workers is excellent and provides a sound basis for effective partnership working.

The Connexions PAs, Christine Burgess and Ray Simmons, are based in the Connexions room and available to complement and support the work of the school's IAG team. All members of the school staff and external guidance workers have CRB clearance.

Component 2: All advice and guidance practitioners will know about the work of other IAG providers who may be better placed to meet learners' needs

The school's Assistant to the Child Protection Co-ordinator and Lead First Aider, Karen Escreet, liaises closely with social services, the NHS nurse, Connexions and school staff. The Connexions base provides a central point for all internal and external IAG professionals to meet to allow for multi-agency follow-up on for example, any Accident and Emergency referrals, homelessness issues and Common Assessment Framework requests. All IAG staff work together as appropriate on a young person's Health Care Plan, if one is in operation, and all work closely with the Child Protection Co-ordinator and the Directors of Achievement.

Christine Burgess, Generic Personal Adviser has a background in youth and community work and has attended sexual health training offered by the school. She complements the work of the IAG team by providing an impartial listening ear that allows 'distance' for learners with multiple guidance needs. All learners with identified additional learning needs receive a guidance interview with a Connexions Personal Adviser and all IAG provision is co-ordinated by the Director of Learning for Guidance (See 3.1).

Element 3: Linked IAG provision

Component 1: The provision of linked information, advice and guidance will be a part of the remit and role of a senior manager within the organisation or service.

Anne Stagg – Director of Learning for Guidance - is the named senior member of staff responsible for all IAG provision which includes Healthy Schools (award achieved summer 2008), careers, drug awareness, sex and relationship education (SRE) and work experience. IAG provision is regularly reviewed and discussed at senior management team meetings and there are clear policies in place for PSHE and CEG.

Connexions Humber draws up an annual Partnership Agreement with the school where developmental issues are discussed and appropriate allocations of PA time agreed. Similarly. Service Level Agreements are made with other external agencies operating regularly within the school. During this assessment, several practitioners commented on the open-door approach adopted by the school and said they felt able to comment on policies and practice whenever the need arose (See also 8.1). The Healthy Schools report commented on the drive and commitment and the openness to new ideas demonstrated by Director of Learning for Guidance

Component 2: All IAG practitioners will make clear to learners the links between IAG services and support learners in their transition between these services.

Sir Henry Cooper School does not hold regular internal multi-agency meetings as the day-to-day level of communication between practitioners is so high (See 2.1). Ray Simmons, the Connexions Personal Adviser (Careers) has worked in the school for the past seven years and reports that there is in place an effective and supportive network that is able to respond quickly and appropriately to learners' needs. All school-based staff are familiar with internal and external agencies supporting young people and the team of Directors of Achievement all share some responsibility for the co-ordination of all personal, educational and vocational IAG with support from Learning Achievement support staff. The clear communication strategies, the stability of staffing and size of the school ensures these arrangements work well.

Component 3: All IAG practitioners will recognise professional boundaries and know which alternative provision is appropriate for signposting or referral to meet each learner's guidance needs.

Sir Henry Cooper School invests heavily in its support systems provided via a range of services and practitioners. Learning Achievement support workers Evelyn King and Carol Lavelle explained the work they did with young people in helping them to achieve, to raise aspirations and to help them deal with their day-to-day lives. They gave examples of feeding and clothing some learners as well as helping with school work. Support workers stay with their year group from year 7 to 11 wherever possible. Each year group has a social area and support workers have offices in each area so that they are easily accessible to learners.

Although Christine Burgess, Connexions Generic PA, was new to the school she felt welcomed and included. Ray Simmons, the long-serving PA Careers reported that the Connexions service was highly valued and he felt himself to be part of the school's 'family'. It was clear that the school nurse, first aider, support workers, Connexions staff and teachers were all committed to the well-being of learners and work together for their benefit. There were several opportunities defined during the course of each week for these practitioners to communicate with or meet each other. All interviewed during this assessment had a good understanding of internal and external support networks.

The school nurse attends external multi-agency meetings and the Connexions service has contacts with a variety of support agencies outside school. All staff have access to the SIMS recording system to inform their work with learners and Connexions has its own Trakrekord system. Information is shared by mutual consent where appropriate. Referral procedures are rigorous and clear.

Element 4: IAG responsiveness to the needs of clients

Component 1: IAG provision will promote equality of opportunity and access

Anne Stagg co-ordinates a programme specifically addressing gender stereotyping – 'Going for Gold' – which is successful in encouraging boys to consider jobs in, for example, health and social care and girls in for example, engineering. Learners are made aware of the 'Let's Talk' mentoring programme and practitioners have received training on gender equality. The school has developed a course in jewellery making to encourage learners to use related design and technology processes.

Reference has already been made in the overview to this report of to the socio-economic factors affecting the progress of learners at the school. Staff are extremely conscious of these and in the resultant barriers to learning and so seek to work closely with not only the learners themselves but also their families. A large number of the school's staff members have been in post for ten years or more and some for over twenty. This stability factor makes a significant contribution to addressing the needs of families living on the North Hull Estate which the school primarily serves. Staff take pride in the added value they give to their learners and raising aspirations is seen as a priority.

Worthy of particular note is the school's alternative off-site provision (See Overview) catering for learners who are disruptive or find difficulty in coping with mainstream school. At Key Stage 3, the aim is to return learners to the main site and to prevent exclusion. At Key Stage 4, learners usually stay in the alternative unit. The numbers are small – usually around 10 to 15 and there is additional support from parents, who may attend with their child at Key Stage 3. The working day is shorter and the Key Stage 4 curriculum includes English, Maths, IT, Remote Science (distance learning), work-related learning, Preparation

for Working Life and the Princes Trust Award. This provision is managed by a Deputy Headteacher and has been in operation for 7 years. This is a significant facility to ensure that learners remain on the school's roll, are engaged and have equal access to appropriate curriculum, external examinations and IAG as provided to all learners.

Component 2: IAG will be accessible to all, with specific resources directed to learners identified as having additional needs

On entering Sir Henry Cooper School approximately 75% of the cohort have reading ages below or well below their chronological age. SENCO Sue Roberts reports that this results in all teaching and learning staff working on differentiated learning materials and curriculum delivery resources to meet individual needs. There are some learners working directly with the SENCO who receive additional support in the Learning Support Units. Learners identified as Gifted and Talented have access to a range of awareness-raising and self-development opportunities, co-ordinated by a part-time member of staff. These include cultural and academic activities, for example, visits to the university and the theatre. Approximately forty Year 11 learners per year go on a residential Study Week where they undertake team building activities and develop independent learning skills. Financial assistance to attend is offered by the school. The school prides itself on the fact that only two learners left school in 2008 without gaining any recognised qualifications.

All year 11 learners have a one-to-one interview with a Connexions Personal Adviser in response to their individual needs and to support them in transition. Information on learners – personal and academic is recorded and shared through the school's SIMS and informs the advice and guidance processes. Learners are supported in accessing information in school and followed up by Connexions, as appropriate, once they progress into learning and training post-16. Most learners go on to vocational courses offered by Hull College, with only a few each year going into apprenticeships. There is a degree of concern expressed about some post-16 learners who have left the school dropping out of chosen courses and it is noted that several learners each year still contact members of the school's staff for advice and guidance as they start in their new place of learning.

Element 5: Quality and delivery of IAG

Component 1: IAG will be underpinned by a development programme of planned personal learning based upon national recommendations

Anne Stagg is responsible for co-ordinating the Personal Social Health and Economic Education programme. It is delivered by a designated team of teachers and Learning Achievement support staff on a weekly basis, 50 minutes per week for one term each year on a carousel. The content of the programme – economic and personal wellbeing – was submitted as part of the evidence and covers national requirements. There are policies for the teaching of PSHE and Careers Education. However, Anne is committed to enhancing and continuously developing the content and delivery of the programme. The low numbers learners leaving the school Not In Education Employment and Training (NEET) post-16 is testament to the IAG they have received both through the curriculum and from individual staff. As quoted in the current school newsletter – *“As part of our on-going PSHE programme, all pupils follow a programme of health education; this incorporates sex and relationship education, drugs, smoking and alcohol education, together with healthy eating, fitness and economic wellbeing. We work closely with a number of health professionals such as the School Nurses, who deliver part of the APAUSE (Added Power and Understanding in Sex Education) programme, Chillout, Health Trainers, Connexions etc.”* This was borne out in the conversations the assessors had with learners throughout the day.

Component 2: IAG will be targeted at the needs of learners and informed by social and economic priorities at local regional and national levels.

This is a very caring school serving a socially and economically disadvantaged area with a learner population requiring individually-tailored information, advice, guidance and general support. There are in place rigorous procedures to quickly identify learners requiring additional support and to ensure that their social and guidance needs are met. The school has developed very strong links with a wide range and diversity of external support and guidance practitioners such as the school nurse, educational psychologists, welfare officers and social workers.

The school is well aware of its geographic and demographic location and works very hard to ensure that all local and national IAG demands made of it are addressed and met. As an example, support worker Carol Lavelle offers help for learners who have experienced significant family loss – not only through bereavement but also through absence of valued and influential parental figures after family breakdown. Referral is made to an external professional bereavement counsellor when required. Another example of the encouragement of positive lifestyles is the work done by support worker Evelyn King. Evelyn co-ordinates lunchtime and after school clubs and activities with a variety of titles – darts, reading, cartoon drawing, drama and music are just some examples. Lunchtime ‘pack-ups’ are organised with the school canteen for young people undertaking these activities so that they do not have to spend time queuing for lunch. “We don’t just deal with the children, we deal with their families as well.” was a sentiment expressed by a number of practitioners we met during the assessment day.

Element 6: Impartiality of IAG provision

Component 1: IAG will provide all available options based on the needs and circumstances of each individual

As the school is situated on the outskirts of Hull, there are direct bus routes both into the city and to nearby Beverley. The perceived travel to work and study area tends to be into the city and, although all options are impartially presented to young people, the most popular option post-16 is into full-time college provision at either Wyke or Wilberforce Sixth Form College or vocational provision at Hull College. A very small number choose to go on to apprenticeships.

Sir Henry Cooper School offers learners a wealth of opportunities to gather information without bias. This is done through the curriculum, with the support of the staff and the Connexions service and by additional activities such as the annual careers fair, use of the ‘i4u’ Student Planner, open access to the Area Wide Prospectus www.learnhull.co.uk and supported use of the inbuilt Common Application Process (CAP).

Component 2: IAG will support learners in making informed decisions not led by institutional targets or goals

Learners reported that they felt comfortable about asking for help in the school, they are aware of the Connexions service and feel confident that their support workers can refer them to the appropriate practitioners for additional help if needed. The whole school ethos is one of helping young people to achieve within the context of their family and social setting and this is done regardless of their academic ability. The Connexions service maintains the impartial information advice and guidance offered on progression pathways.

Element 7: IAG for learning, work and progression

Component 1: IAG for learning, work and progression will support learners in exploring the implications of possible career choices when planning their futures

Records of achievement are kept for learners in year 9 and more formally in Year 11. The work-related learning programme in Year 10 centres around work experience. Learners are given experience in the application process, interview techniques through mock interviews and experience in real work settings. A lot of work is done to give learners the skills to enter work and to understand the needs of employers. To help with planning for the future, guidance interviews are available throughout Year 11 and drop-in sessions are held in the Connexions room where there is ample access to IT facilities. (See also 1.1)

Component 2: The work of IAG practitioners will be informed by up-to-date and accurate labour market information

Learners are encouraged to make decisions that are informed by local labour market information and progression pathways. The local LMI website www.lmihumber.co.uk the EBP's LMI newsletter and the 'i4u' Student Planner are used to inform staff, Connexions PAs and learners while the careers education programme and the input from Personal Advisers ensures that learners have many opportunities to match LMI with their considered progression options. An Industrial Links meeting provides a forum for gathering information from local providers on progression opportunities.

Component 3: IAG provision will ensure that all learners have access to the information they need to make informed choices

Learners and their parents are invited to attend the school's careers fair which is held during the autumn term each year. This, plus the use of the Area Prospectus, i4u Student Planner, other local and national publications and the school e-mail system all help give each learner every chance to consider all options available post-16. The personal development programme and the opportunity to discuss ideas with a specialist practitioner ensures that all year 11 learners have information, advice and guidance to help in making their decisions and understand the consequences of those decisions.

Element 8: Evaluation of IAG

Component 1: All IAG practitioners and learners are able to feed back their views on the provision within the organisation

Learners stated that they felt Sir Henry Cooper School offered a supportive environment where they were able to work and enjoy good relationships. They mentioned the induction day tour and visits before they came to the school as being important in helping them to settle down. They were asked about bullying and said that it was dealt with and was not a significant problem. One Year 11 learner commented on the tutor group culture that helped her to find her 'place' in the school. This was seen as natural and supportive, not divisive or aggressive. They all commented on the improved reputation of Sir Henry Cooper School on the local estate and were supportive of their head teacher. All felt that they had people to talk to and pointed to Learning Achievement support staff as being particularly good points of contact. The APAUSE report was submitted as evidence for the learner voice on sex and relationship education and a big majority of the responses was positive.

Staff commented positively on the fortnightly supervision meetings with line managers and on departmental development plans and also endorsed the headteacher's 'open door' policy; they felt able to use this when necessary. The assessors were impressed by the teamwork approach taken by the school in all aspects of its work and the open approach taken with regard to feeding back to management any concern or issue regarding any aspects of the school's work.

Recommendation

There is a note of caution to be appended to this excellent report. Although, as stated throughout, there are excellent teamworking arrangements in place, much of the success of the IAG provision in the school can be firmly accorded to the school's Director of Learning for Guidance, Anne Stagg. She carries a major responsibility for the implementation of the PSHCE programme, the liaison with external agencies and the co-ordination of all IAG activities. The school must ensure that the responsibilities she holds are more equitably shared in order that, when the time comes for Anne to move on, the current excellent IAG provision may be maintained. It would not be reasonable to expect that a new appointee could single-handedly pick up all that Anne has put in place.

However, there is no doubt in the minds of the assessors that Sir Henry Cooper School has in place the IAG strategies and requirements that fulfil the Kingston upon Hull 14-19 Strategy for Learning Gold Standard for Information Advice and Guidance.

The assessors recommend that this school is awarded the Standard.

Vince Barrett and Maureen Kelham, Gold Standard Award Assessors

Date of recommendation: 30.01.09

Date of Award:

Date for re-assessment: December 2011