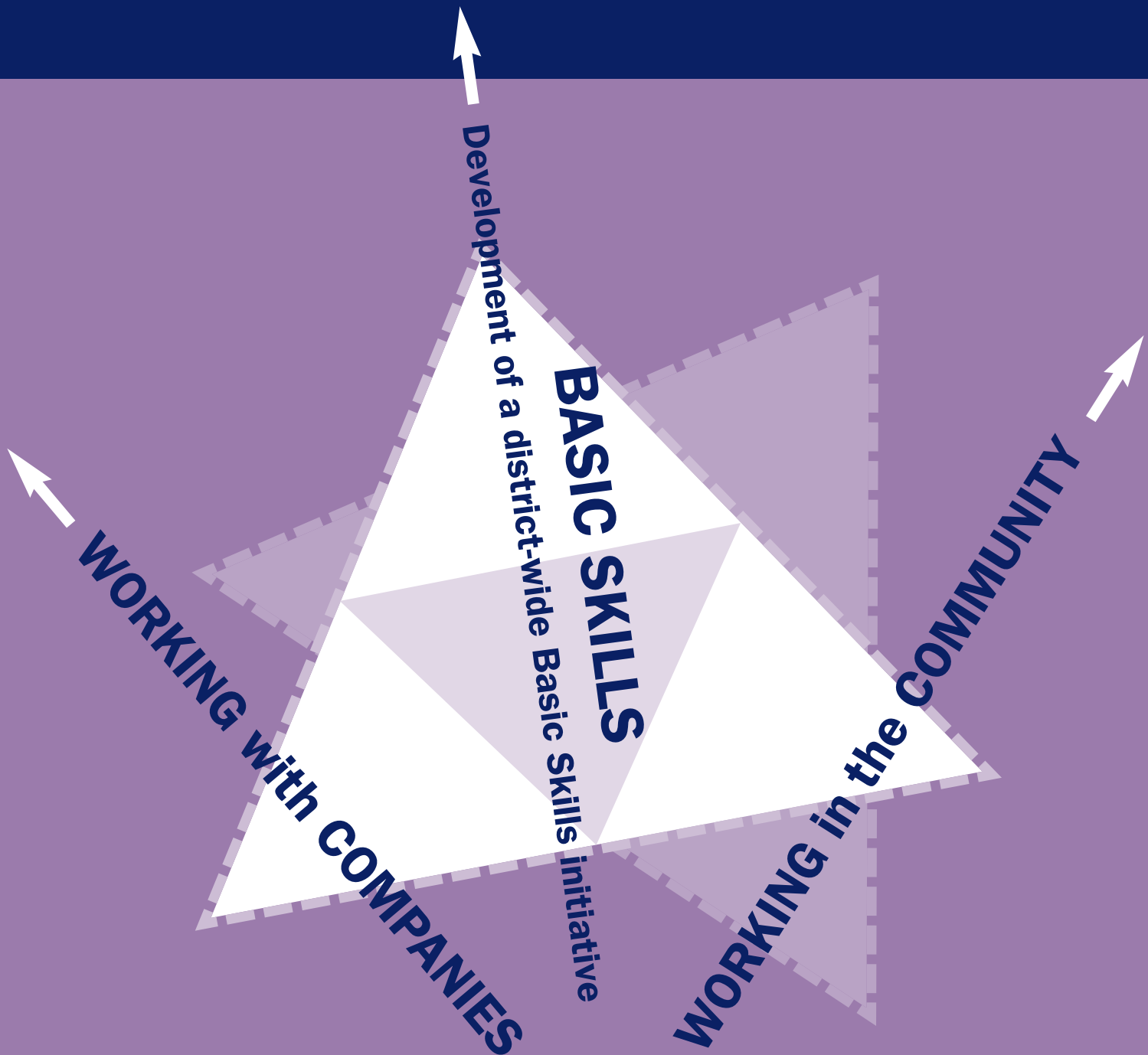


# good governance & management at Thanet College



# working in the community

## INTRODUCTION

The FEFC Inspection of Thanet College in May 1998 assessed College Governance and Management as Grade 1 outstanding provision, which has many strengths and few weaknesses.

The College has been successful in bidding for resources under Category 5 of the Standards Fund to develop a series of information packs as a contribution to sharing 'good practice' with other further education colleges in Kent. This is the second series we have produced. We are pleased to take this opportunity.

Our aim has been to produce material which conveys the overall nature and character of the approach we follow at Thanet College without in any sense wishing to produce an A to Z guide. Our intention has been to make the packs useful, practical and supportive of colleagues in Kent who believe there is a need to review their approach to aspects of governance and management.

The units in this pack cover the following governance and management issues:

- Basic Skills Development of a District-wide Basic Skills Initiative
- Working in the Community
- Working with Companies

## COMMENTARY OF THE THANET COLLEGE INSPECTION TEAM

The report stated:

'The College's mission presents a vision of a college that is a community facility and resource. This vision is realised through the College's close links with schools, other colleges and external agencies, which include the county and district council, chamber of commerce, employers, social services and voluntary organisations. The College is perceived by these agencies and the wider community as a key contributor to the continuing regeneration of the Isle of Thanet. Marketing and business development staff have established close working relations with local industry and public services, notably with a major cross-channel ferry company and the Kent Ambulance Service'.

## CONTEXT

In July 1997 the government's widening participation committee, led by Helena Kennedy launched the "Learning Works" report. The outcome was far reaching and established the fundamental requirements and structure for the development of educational opportunities for all post-18 learners, whatever their level of need.

The report argues that widening participation in post school education is the key to economic prosperity for both the nation and individuals and that further education is a weapon against poverty, which will create a more cohesive society.

The government recognised and celebrated the unique contribution that further education



could make in the provision for under-represented groups. Funding was to be provided to the sector to enable partnerships to be created. In 1998 Kent Association of Further Education Corporation (KAFEC), Kent Adult Education, Kent TEC, Kent Careers Service, and the HE sector providers, collaboratively sought to implement a long-term strategy for widening participation in Kent.

The Thanet district has nine social priority wards and a unique profile in terms of social deprivation within Kent. Thanet College grasped this opportunity to implement change: to provide educational opportunities for traditionally under-represented groups in Margate, Cliftonville and Ramsgate.

### CORE PRINCIPLES

- The strategic aims of the College define a high priority and commitment to Working in the Community, widening participation and social inclusion
- Total commitment from the Principal to invest in the development of community provision
- Promotion of a college culture of collaboration between the College and the wider community
- A clear focus placed upon establishing partnerships with community groups, to enable a sound framework to be established for responding to the aspirations of potential learners
- Implementation of a flexible approach to marketing and delivery in order to attract the disaffected learner
- Commitment of resources to enable Work in the Community to be developed and sustained involving lower margins than other college work initially
- Delivery of programmes near to where the identified group live or at a familiar site
- Students on community programmes to be seen as part of the investment in the College's future

### KEY FEATURES OF THE THANET COLLEGE APPROACH

- Provision of government funding to allow programmes to be embedded into the core business of the College
- Other funding streams accessed to provide a surround to core funding to ensure financial viability
- Skills and experience of partner organisations included in the development of community based programmes
- Systems and documentation within the College challenged to find ways of breaking down barriers to learning such as travel, childcare and attitudes, all of which reflect the difference in the approaches required in this area of work
- Marketing strategies developed which recognise that traditional methods and approaches are unlikely to attract potential learners; the message has to be geared to communicating



with those who are not interested in attending college to pursue their learning

- Divisional Manager nominated to oversee the provision
- Middle Manager nominated and allocated time to develop the provision
- Recruitment of staff with a genuine interest, empathy and skills in working with a diverse client group to work specifically in the community
- Recruitment of a coordinator who had knowledge and experience in community capacity building
- Knowledge and skills of partner organisations used to design and support the delivery of staff development which relate to community issues and needs
- A network of outreach centres established in the premises of other organisations to enable learning to take place in the context of people's interests and activities

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Governors**

Through the College's strategic planning process demonstrate a commitment to working in the community and monitor and receive reports on progress of this work

- **Principal**

Ensures the operation of the College reflects the targets and aims of the College's Strategic Plan and provides a high profile lead within the College and the wider community

- **Deputy Principal**

Ensures staffing needs and requirements are met and that quality standards are achieved

- **Director of Finance and Corporate Services**

Has overall responsibility for ensuring the financial viability of work with companies including pricing policy

- **Curriculum Divisional Directors**

Has a pro-active role in the support and empowerment of middle managers to maximise work within the community

- **Middle Manager**

Is informed of community issues, action and funding

Is involved in related community initiatives e.g. Thanet Basic Skills Strategy

Cultivates partnerships to support recruitment and retention

Applies a progression route for learners through relevant accreditation to give credibility



to student achievement

Deploys and manages staff involved in Working in the Community to achieve targets defined within the Annual Operating Plan

Promotes positive role models by recruiting local people into teaching and administrative roles. Employs staff who have a genuine interest in the development of the local community

- **Coordinator (Working in the Community)**

Is responsible for liaison with outside community agencies, attending where necessary community group meetings to gather local intelligence in order to source new students and to market courses

Recruits, enrolls and inducts new students

Liaises with community leaders to promote a team spirit and identity

- **Lecturers**

Adopt teaching strategies to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners

Have the confidence to teach in a variety of learning environments e.g. church hall, community centre

Promote learning and progression for all students

- **Business Development Manager**

Has responsibility for identifying new college business opportunities and establishing partnerships in the wider community as the framework for ensuring the sustainability of this work

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The College decided to establish a dedicated department after seeding research projects and activities in the community. The results of these early endeavours indicated that more work in this field was available and required by the community. The department officially opened in July 2000 with a Middle Manager assigned, a Community Development Worker and clerical support. The task set was to widen participation and increase the activity already established. In late October 2000 a new manager was appointed responsible for community education across the College.

In July 2000 student numbers totalled in excess of 200. In September 2001 student numbers are far in excess of 1700.

Thanet College is establishing itself as a Further Education College able and willing to respond effectively to the community's learning needs.

## FUTURE CHALLENGES

- To place community based learning provision on a similar financial basis to mainstream provision



**Impact**

To maintain and develop Working in the Community on the same business footing as other college provision to ensure sustainability

- Adapt and embed quality assurance procedures into community provision

**Impact**

To maintain and increase numbers recruited, retain and offer a progression route of study

- Maintain and develop partner relationships

**Impact**

To continue to meet flexibly the needs of the community

- To promote inclusive teaching approaches in the broader work of the College

**Impact**

To raise awareness amongst the College staff of the need for a flexible approach to teaching. To support the recruitment of new staff who are receptive to learners with diverse needs

- To structure the transfer from community programmes to college based courses

**Impact**

Creating a more pro-active community based response to identified group and individual needs

- To re-evaluate on an ongoing basis the challenges of Working in the Community

**Impact**

To meet the challenges of providing for the most disaffected members of the community

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

Thanet College Community Education Programme 2001-2002 is included in this pack.

**YOUR RESPONSE TO THIS PACK**

Our commitment is to respond to colleges who may wish to pursue an interest with us in using any of our ideas or information.

We are continually reviewing and modifying our governance and management capability in the clear recognition of its value in achieving better outcomes in college performance and effectiveness. Should you wish to comment upon the information contained in the pack we would be pleased to hear from you. Contact either Bryan Mitchell, project coordinator or Caroline Hayward on 01843 605000 or Email: [principal@thanet.ac.uk](mailto:principal@thanet.ac.uk)

