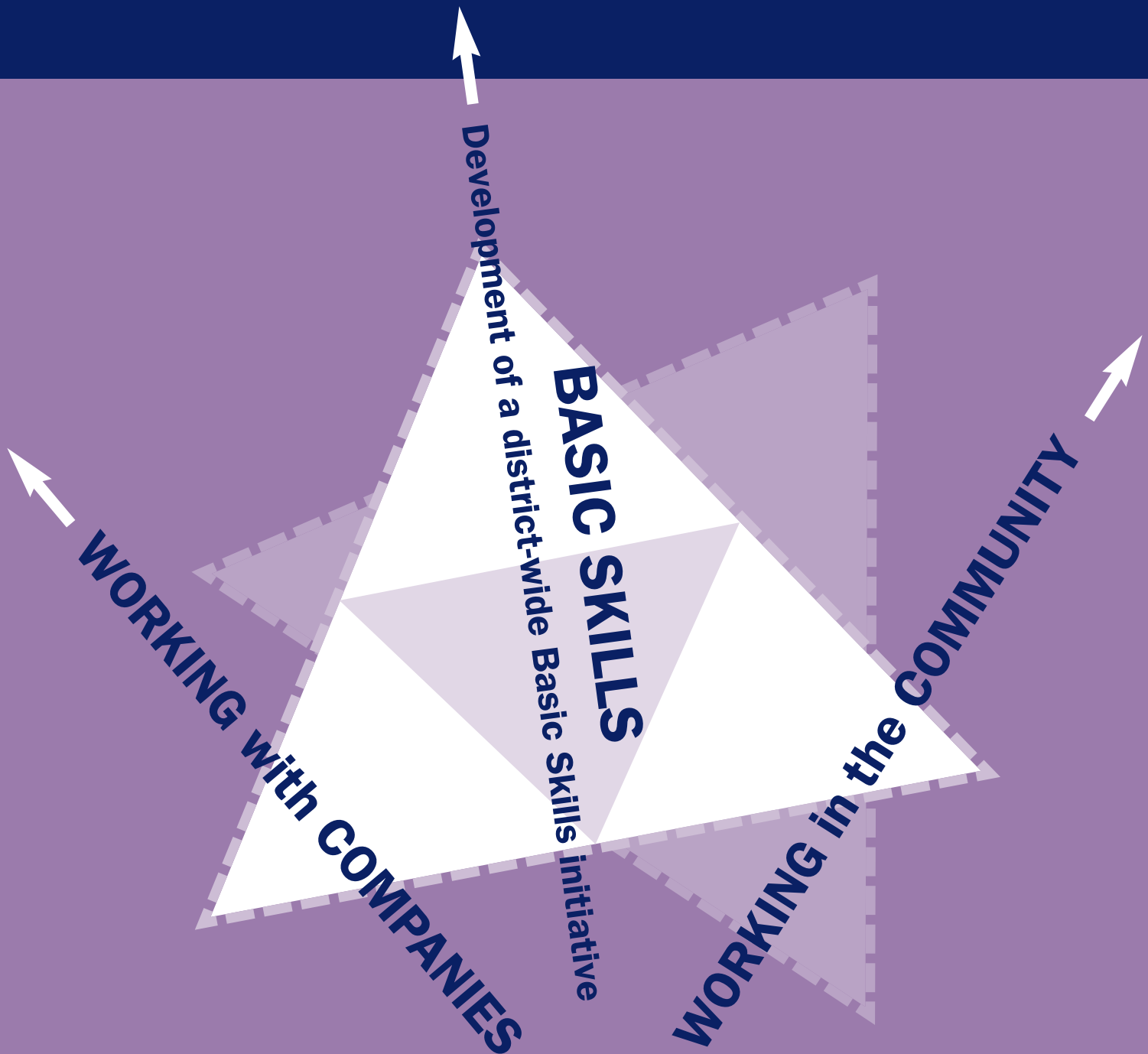


good governance & management at Thanet College



contents

**Basic Skills – Development of a
District-wide Basic Skills Initiative**

Working in the Community

Working with Companies

basic skills – development of a district-wide basic skills initiative

INTRODUCTION

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The units in this pack cover the following:

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

DEFINITION OF BASIC SKILLS

Basic Skills relates to functional literacy and numeracy – the ability to read, write and speak in English and to use Mathematics at a level necessary to function at work and in society in general. It is estimated that 1 in 5 adults (i.e. 7 million adults in England, 10,000 in Thanet) has less literacy than that expected of an 11 year old. The situation for numeracy is both worse and more confusing because the numeracy tests are less reliable than literacy tests and therefore the evidence is more controversial. The National Working Group regards 40% (14 million adults in England) as a more realistic figure of those who have some numeracy problems and who function below the level expected of an 11 year old.

CONTEXT

Thanet is, geographically, relatively isolated on the north east coast of Kent; it has a population of approximately 130,000. It was one of the first areas in the South East region to obtain Objective 2 status within the framework of the National Regeneration programme and has obtained significant regional aid. This reflects the extent of the level of poverty and need in the Thanet district, which is recognised as having the highest levels of deprivation in Kent based upon a range of measures which include levels of low income, unemployment and poor housing conditions. There are very few large employers and a preponderance of small companies which affects significantly the approach undertaken to training in the workplace.



Thanet College has established an effective working relationship with Thanet District Council and other partners in both the statutory and voluntary sectors. It is well represented in groups and provides leadership in the management and direction of projects which make up the district's regeneration programme.

THE ROLE OF CONSULTANCY IN DEVELOPING BASIC SKILLS OPPORTUNITIES

In February 1999 the Basic Skills Agency was commissioned by Thanet District Council's Regeneration Unit to review existing provision and arrangements for supporting basic skills achievement in the Thanet area with a particular focus upon nine community economic development wards. The Agency was asked to make recommendations on how to make best use of existing and future regeneration resources to promote the development of basic skills in the area.

The Basic Skills Agency was asked to comment specifically on the following:

- What is the nature and extent of existing collaboration on developing basic skills learning opportunities between organisations providing complementary services?
- What is the potential for developing a more coherent strategy for securing basic skills improvements in the area?
- How best can multi-agency working be developed so that existing capacity can offer better opportunities to those of the population of Thanet who have low-level basic skills?
- Which models of effective practice should be considered within the overall basic skills achievement strategy to improve significantly basic skills levels in the area? How best can additional resources be targeted?
- What are suitably challenging but achievable targets for basic skills improvements in the Thanet area?

During the period of the consultancy contact was made with a wide range of people representing many of the key stakeholders in the Thanet district.

FINDINGS

The Basic Skills Agency found a general lack of information on what works best for different groups with basic skills needs. This was the case for all phases and sectors. They found a general agreement that raising standards of basic skills should be at the heart of Thanet's regeneration initiative and anti-poverty strategies. They recommended the development of a coordinated, 'cradle to grave' approach to the provision of basic skills opportunities focussing upon the wards of the area with the highest level of deprivation.

● **Report of the National Working Party (The Moser Report)**

The report of the National Working Party chaired by Sir Claus Moser 'Improving Literacy and Numeracy – a fresh start' was published in early 1999. It highlighted the extent of the basic skills needs of the adult population in this country and made a set of recommendations for



action at the national level. This report gave an added significance and momentum to the Thanet Basic Skills Project.

● Preparation of the Way Forward

Thanet District Council's Single Regeneration team sought the views of a range of partners who all confirmed a commitment to supporting a drive to improve the basic skills opportunities in the area based upon the findings and recommendations of the Basic Skills Agency

A consultant based locally was then commissioned to help establish and launch a draft basic skills strategy for Thanet under the direction of a newly formed Basic Skills Steering Group. An overarching draft basic skills strategy was developed with the help of the consultant.

● Basic Skills Strategy for Thanet

From its inception the draft basic skills strategy was target driven and had the long-term aim to drive up the quality, quantity and effectiveness of provision of basic skills. The strategy is characterised by:

- Having clear aims and objectives
- Developing community involvement and commitment to raising basic skills with a particular focus on lifelong learning
- Ensuring the coordination of existing and future core provision
- Promoting the development of an innovative multi-agency approach in basic skills provision
- Setting quality assurance standards for the full range of its activity
- Defining evaluation and dissemination strategies
- Ensuring the achievement of measurable basic skills targets for the Thanet area

Arrangements were put in place to appoint a full time Basic Skills Project Director who would have lead responsibility for developing and implementing the strategy. The post was advertised nationally but after a disappointing response the Steering Group decided to improve the salary and readvertise reaffirming their commitment to the appointment of a full-time Project Manager with the skills and abilities to lead the project successfully and win the confidence of a wide range of partners, particularly at agency and community level. The readvertisement produced a stronger field of applicants and a Project Director was appointed with a strong track record in further and community education.

● Basic Skills Steering Group

The Thanet Basic Skills Steering Group has a broad based senior representation from different stakeholder interests across the district. The Principal of Thanet College has chaired the group from its inception.



The role of the group is to:

- Provide overall direction in the development, coordination and implementation of the basic skills strategic plan for Thanet
- Promote raising attainment, lifelong learning and social inclusion as part of the wider regeneration activity in the Thanet area
- Ensure the coherence of existing and future core provision by discrete organisations
- Promote the development of innovative multi-agency working by increasing basic skills opportunities and take-up
- Ensure the programme of basic skills is informed by sound evaluation and research methodologies leading to a long-term sustainable programme

The Project Director was appointed in April 2000 and is accountable to the Thanet Basic Skills Project Steering Group reporting to them on a regular basis. This group reflects the collective responsibility and broad stakeholder support for the project. Thanet College acts as the employer and the College Principal is responsible for the operational line management of the post. The legal entity which receives and manages the project's funding is Thanet College. The Project Steering Group is not a legal entity and therefore is unable to fulfil this role.

● Launch Seminar

The launch seminar involved over 100 delegates from many sectors and organisations both locally and from a wider area. The keynote speaker was Alan Wells, Chief Executive of the Basic Skills Agency, and other colleagues from Derbyshire and Norfolk shared their own good practice. The draft basic skills strategy for Thanet was presented to the launch and a consultation process followed resulting in the production of the final strategy, which is included in this pack. The opportunity was taken to obtain some positive publicity in the local media and also to introduce the newly appointed Project Director which enabled her to begin to build some important working relationships with a range of partners. The feedback from the launch seminar was most encouraging and confirmed a broad agreement with the vision and the commitment of the Steering Group.

● Funding

The Project has acquired funding to September 2002 from the Single Regeneration Budget for Thanet as a surround to the core budget for basic skills provision and development in the area. By far the largest part of this budget is contributed through core funding drawn down by Thanet College as the main provider of further education in the area although other funding streams have been accessed including the Single Regeneration Budget, European Social Fund, South East Region Development Agency and Pathfinder Fund.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE THANET DISTRICT APPROACH TO BASIC SKILLS

- A recognition of the right of all individuals to have opportunities to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy in settings which are appropriate to the individual



- Establishing a range of opportunities for learning, the majority of which are likely to be community based and not delivered in conventional further education settings
- The role of basic skills opportunities as a key component of a district based programme of regeneration activities
- Placing the widening of participation at the centre of the strategy through an appreciation of the need for people to feel valued and to have a positive influence upon the world in which they live
- Placing quality standards at the heart of the provision which then relates to a professional development and qualification framework which ensures the staff who teach basic skills are well qualified and suited to the role
- Making good use of evaluation methodology to develop what works well and to reject or modify approaches which are less successful
- A long-term programme is required which recognises the scale and nature of the challenge which cannot be achieved in a short time frame

KEY FEATURES OF THE THANET APPROACH TO DEVELOPING BASIC SKILLS OPPORTUNITIES

- That regeneration budgets should put a surround to core provision and not be a substitute for core funding
- An overarching basic skills strategy functions as a coherent framework for supporting different phases and sectors
- A basic skills steering group gives direction to the strategy to support raising attainment, social inclusion and regeneration activity
- A full-time Project Director works with the partners on the steering group and is accountable to them for establishing and delivering a basic skills strategic plan for the Thanet District
- A flexible approach to the development of basic skills opportunities which aims to meet people where they are

IMPACT UPON THANET COLLEGE

- Thanet College provides the majority of the programme of basic skills opportunities both within the College and in the wider community
- The College is firmly committed to playing a major role in the development of high quality basic skills learning opportunities in the district and to supporting the Thanet Basic Skills Project – Skills for Success



- The College's nine year Strategic Plan includes a firm commitment to playing a major role in the development of basic skills opportunities in Thanet. The plan expresses a firm commitment and sets targets for developing basic skills opportunities
- A senior manager has a clear responsibility for the development of high quality basic skills opportunities across all college provision
- Training has been given a priority through the Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Skills City and Guilds 9281 within its cross-staff development programme and a staged approach is underway to broaden the base of college staff who teach basic skills programmes within the College and also in the community
- Programmes are in place to offer extended support through a range of formats including outreach provision, drop-in workshops in the evenings and at weekends to provide an increasing number of part-time students with a basic skills assessment
- The outcomes of initial assessment are recorded and programmes are being developed to meet the identified basic skills needs of students
- Through the Inclusive Learning initiative curriculum modification is being developed to enable greater accessibility for learners
- Funding streams necessary to support the developing work of the College play a vital part in the delivery of quality outcomes

WIDER PARTNERSHIPS

KCC Education and Libraries Directorate has given very strong support to the project through enhanced advisory support to the LEA's schools. A substantial number of Thanet schools are now obtaining the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark as a result of the enhanced support plans which are in place to increase the number of participating schools over the next few years. The membership of the Skills for Success Project Steering Group reflects the broad based partnership which provides the underpinning support for the project. Representatives from the College, the District Council, the Health Authority, the County Council's Social Services, Education and Libraries and Adult Education sectors, and the East Kent Community Service are all members of the Steering Group.

The College's Strategic Plan places an emphasis upon widening participation in education and training for groups who are traditionally under-represented.

The College will continue to play a lead role in the provision of post-16 learning opportunities. Increasingly this is done in a context where the College is a partner with a range of agencies from the statutory, voluntary and private sector, all of whom have a commitment to creating and supporting opportunities for people to develop their learning even though this may not be their 'core business'. The networks that this has created have already made the challenge of widening participation one which is more readily achievable and have tapped into a wider range of skills and resources within the community.



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In recent months the project has been designated one of nine Pathfinder projects, one in each area of England plus one in a prison. DfEE sponsors the projects as part of the government's Skills for Life initiative. Thanet is the project for the South East of England. In the first stage of the Pathfinder, March-August 2001, the Project has been unrolling the new intensive training for adult numeracy and literacy tests.

In the second stage of the Pathfinder, September 2001 to March 2002, the Pathfinder will involve incentives for students and employees and different ways of teaching basic skills all of which will be tested and evaluated.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Thanet Basic Skills Project Strategic Plan 2000-2005

YOUR RESPONSE TO THIS PACK

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working in the community

INTRODUCTION

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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.

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COMMENTARY OF THE THANET COLLEGE INSPECTION TEAM

The report stated:

'The development of distance learning programmes has been particularly successful'.

The report went on to state:

'The Business division has very good working relationships with employers, who describe the College as 'responsible, flexible and innovative in bringing the College to the workplace'. Distance learning programmes have expanded rapidly and inspectors agreed that they are very successful in providing a flexible mode of study for many students'.

CONTEXT

From 1993 Thanet College has increased significantly the income it receives via the FEFC (now the LSC) for company based training and development. It has also attracted funding from the LSC formerly funded through the local Training and Enterprise Council to deliver work based training. These two funding routes, together with fees charged directly to employers and European grants have enabled the College to develop its programmes to meet the needs of employers.

The College has needed to compete with other local and national training providers to deliver flexible company based training. To remain competitive in this market place the College has amended its staffing profile and revised job descriptions to match the changing skills and competencies required of staff. For example a separate office was set up in 1998 to deal with all administrative tasks relating to flexible company based provision. This has facilitated standardisation of presentation of resources, candidate tracking and has provided a central point of contact for staff and students. The office is linked to the college library, drop-in computer terminals, media services and computer and conference rooms which are easily accessible for use by local companies.



Local companies, which in Thanet are mainly SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises, employing up to 250 staff), have responded positively to the opportunity to improve the skills base of their work force through training and assessment delivered on their premises. In contrast few companies are willing to release their staff for one day or half-day per week training programmes on the College premises. Pro-active liaison with managers and supervisors within companies has been at the heart of the success of the company based provision, forming successful learning partnerships.

CORE PRINCIPLES

- The strategic aims of the College define a high priority and commitment to working with companies and bringing the College to the workplace
- Targets for company based training incorporated into the Annual Operating Plan
- Employment of appropriately skilled and vocationally qualified, flexible staff
- Integration of work with companies across all sections of the College
- Pro-active role of the College in encouraging companies to become learning organisations
- High level of flexibility and responsiveness to the quality and range of company based need

KEY FEATURES OF THE THANET COLLEGE APPROACH TO WORKING WITH COMPANIES

- Cross-college communication relating to working with employers through regular meetings, attended by a member of the Senior Management Team
- Training needs analysis conducted within companies prior to selecting appropriate programmes of study for staff
- Employers' organisational needs carefully considered and ongoing communication between college staff and managers/supervisors within client companies
- All open and distance learning programmes' delivery methodology reviewed through the College's robust internal quality assurance system. Annual course reports produced by course teams consistent with the requirements for other modes of programme delivery
- Staff tutor oversees distance learning tutorials as part of the College's commitment to quality improvement and meeting the needs of all students
- The College's comprehensive staff development programme available to all staff
- The effective use of student induction, mid programme and completion questionnaires by students to inform programme development
- Resources prepared to suit a wide variety of organisations. Where several students are working towards a qualification via one employer, college staff link with staff within the employer's organisation to design relevant learning and assessment materials



- Induction and ongoing support on the employers' premises for staff who are involved in supporting the assessment process
- Thorough induction and ongoing support for all students through structured tutorials at the workplace
- All students are encouraged to use the facilities offered by the Open Learning Resource Centre
- All contact with students documented using a progress report/action plan and a copy made available to their manager/supervisor
- Tutorial times are arranged to cause minimum disruption to activity within the students' workplace. College staff accommodate the shift patterns of students
- Tutorials are supplemented with taught sessions and workshops at the College or on employers' premises
- All college facilities and services are made available to open and distance learning students, including additional learning support and IT training
- Accreditation for prior learning is given wherever possible
- Ongoing support is available to students via telephone or electronic mail

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Governors**

Through the College's strategic planning process demonstrate a commitment to working with businesses, monitor and receive reports on the 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 with business partners

- **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 with companies



- **Business Development Manager**

A middle manager with responsibility to network with local businesses, carry out training needs analysis and negotiate how Thanet College can provide the training required. Responsible for accessing non LSC monies to fund students on courses or fund infrastructure projects; cascades company training needs and funding opportunities to other middle managers

- **Middle Managers**

Responsible for marketing, operational management of programmes, communication with company management, identification and development of new programmes, deployment of appropriate staff

- **Lecturers**

Provide the delivery of the learning programmes to students. Responsible for induction, tutorials, assessment and verification of students' work. Coordinators may also undertake a minimum level of classroom teaching

- **Assessors**

Carry out assessment in the workplace

- **Administrators**

A discrete pool of administrators carry out the registration, certification, preparation of learning and assessment resources and student tracking. They also assist distance and open learning students to use Information Learning Technology resources

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

TETI (Thanet Employment Training Initiative) has been in existence for almost six years. It was established in response to a need defined by local companies to focus upon developing a work ethic amongst new recruits, particularly related to engineering. Since its inception the programme has supported more than 100 candidates into employment. More recently, as a response to a general shortage of engineers in the East Kent area, a project has been established with the short-term aim of targeting 60 students into engineering training within the next year. The project involves collaborative arrangements between Thanet College, Canterbury Christ Church University College and the wider employer community. The challenge will be to promote engineering as an attractive career and to offer innovative programmes which are relevant and meet the needs both of students and employers.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

- **DEVELOPING THE COLLEGE MIS SYSTEM**

Reconciling MIS with roll-on roll-off style of delivery

Impact

To facilitate enrolment of students at any stage during the year and to set duration of programme from exact date of entry



- **INFORMATION LEARNING TECHNOLOGY (ILT)**

Developing integration of ILT resources into all programmes

Impact

To provide access to learning resources via disk, CD-ROM or the Internet. Greater use of electronic mail for communication between students and coordinators and assessors

- **FUNDING**

Ensure continuance of a variety of funding streams. The work with SMEs is extremely price sensitive and in order to remain competitive the College needs to continue to access funding from a variety of sources

Impact

Maintenance of existing customer base and diversification into new companies

- **TRACKING**

Development of a database to track all employer contact cross-college

Impact

This will enable all sections of the College to have an awareness of the contacts being made within companies and students enrolled with the College. Thus a more holistic and seamless approach can be adopted by the College

- **RETENTION AND ACHIEVEMENT**

Ensure performance indicators clearly reflect retention and achievement of company based students

Impact

This will allow a comparison between programmes offered by different modes of delivery with national benchmarks which can then be shared with companies to inform their decision making

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

We would be willing to share other relevant information/documentation on request.

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