

Diplomas: inspection findings

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- Ofsted first reported on the Diploma in August 2009
- www.ofsted.gov.uk/Publicationsandresearch
- Findings from 2009/10 survey due for publication shortly

Inspection findings: outcomes for learners

- Learners made good progress in most of the lessons of principal learning seen and worked at the standard expected of their particular level
- Learners showed high levels of motivation and good behaviour in the principal learning and worked well with their peers from other institutions
- Learners enjoyed applied learning and the opportunity to work in realistic vocational contexts

The quality of teaching and learning: strengths

- Learners from different institutions worked well together and were actively engaged in, and took responsibility for, their learning
- Activities were linked to realistic contexts and linking of theoretical and practical aspects of learning
- Employers were involved in student assignments and course delivery
- Subject specialists worked collaboratively

The quality of teaching and learning: strengths

- A variety of enjoyable and challenging activities promoted good behaviour and attendance
- Appropriately experienced staff taught predominantly in well-equipped venues, using high-quality, specialist equipment effectively
- Effective planning, based on prior assessment, took account of the needs of different groups, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

The quality of teaching and learning: areas for development

Functional skills

- Functional skills varied too much, both within and between consortia
- The best teaching of functional skills included well planned, pacy lessons with a range of activities which improved students' functional skills and enabled them to apply functional skills in other elements of their courses
- More typically, the teaching of functional skills was too theoretical and students were not able to apply and practise the skills

The quality of teaching and learning: areas for development



Functional skills

- Opportunities for teachers to plan, develop and share ideas and approaches in the teaching of functional skills were limited
- Functional skills were often taught in the home institution so pupils in the same consortium on the same Diploma course had widely different experiences of functional skills
- The work seen in functional skills was often unrelated to the vocational context of the principal learning

The quality of teaching and learning: areas for development

Assessment

- Sharing of assessment information between principal learning and functional skills was underdeveloped
- Early assessment of learners' standards of attainment in the principal learning was limited
- The quality of teachers' assessment of learning was variable

Curriculum range, access and development

- Learners benefited from a wide range of good links with employers who enhanced the activities provided
- Weaknesses in curriculum provision included:
 - the lack of effective arrangements for providing functional skills
 - underdeveloped provision for additional and specialised learning

Information, advice, guidance and support: strengths

- Consortia generally used prior assessment information to place students on the right level for the Diploma
- Induction arrangements were well planned, comprehensive and effective enabling learners to settle to new courses quickly and develop good working relationships with learners from other institutions

Information, advice, guidance and support: areas for development

- The quality of information varied between schools in some consortia; some consortia used a variety of effective strategies to inform students about Diplomas
- Recruitment to the Diplomas reflected long-established, gender-stereotypical choices and there was little evidence of concerted or effective work to challenge these. The take-up of Diplomas by learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was low.

Information, advice, guidance and support: areas for development

- Use of the local, widely available web-based 14-19 prospectuses was patchy and often ineffective because:
 - references to the Diploma were inconsistent
 - they were not part of a coordinated approach to guidance
 - learners, particularly those with learning difficulties, found them difficult to use or were unaware of how to use them

The effectiveness of leadership and management: strengths

- Procedures for coordinating collaborative provision centrally within consortia were effective. These were characterised by clear roles and responsibilities, written protocols and procedures for managing finances, transport and routine functions.
- The consortia used institutional specialisms and expertise well to aid development planning, locate provision and assign lead responsibilities.

The effectiveness of leadership and management: areas for development

Quality assurance

- Planned protocols had not been applied fully so that weaknesses were not always identified
- Weaknesses in provision and outcomes were identified too late
- The quality assurance of teaching and learning across the consortia was insufficiently evaluative

The effectiveness of leadership and management: areas for development

Quality assurance

- Monitoring of learners' progress and well-being by consortia was underdeveloped
- Providers did not always share information about learners' educational backgrounds and support needs

The effectiveness of leadership and management: areas for development

- In consortia where quality assurance arrangements were good, they had brought about improvements in provision through:
 - external and internal scrutiny by partner institutions
 - lesson observations
 - collection of learner views
 - moderation of assessed work