

## **1. Local Authority visit to the SMLC**

On Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September a visit was undertaken by Regan Delf, Head of SEN and Maggie Baker, Partnership Adviser – Access to Education to quality assure education provision and child protection.

## **2. Outcomes and achievement of students**

### **Context**

This section of the report is based on a discussion with the Head of the College and staff on 10.9.12 in the week prior to pupils starting back at the school for the autumn term. As a consequence it was not possible to observe lessons, speak to pupils or examine their work on this occasion.

The college is an independent alternative provider that offers 5 morning sessions from Monday to Friday over three 12 week terms each year. Sessions run from 9am to 12.55pm.

The college is not registered as a school and is not thus subject to inspection by Ofsted.

The college describes itself as offering student-centred learning within a learning community. It does not follow GCSE or equivalent accredited courses and is not registered as an examination centre. It will however work to support pupils who are taking GCSEs via other routes such as distance learning or the national extension college. The college is registered for the Arts Award and pupils can work towards the bronze and silver awards.

There are four qualified teachers on the staff including the Head of the College. Other adults working with pupils are volunteers or students on placement.

There were 19 pupils on roll last year of whom 16 were funded through Brighton and Hove. This year the college anticipates 16 pupils on roll at the start of this term. The college report attendance to be very good however no attendance records were seen.

Most students at the college have come via the home education route but occasionally students are referred by mainstream schools. Students tend to have found difficulty with the formal structure and organisation

of schools. Some have experienced problems at school and a number are reported to have emotional and mental health issues.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

As students are not following accredited courses through the College with the exception of the Arts Award, it is not easy to evaluate outcomes for students or progress towards educational objectives. The college does not have a formal process for self-evaluation or school-improvement planning and so again it is difficult to evidence robust analysis of the strengths and areas for development in teaching and learning and quality of provision to an external audience.

However there is undoubted staff commitment to the students and the values of the college in terms of child-centred learning are clearly at the heart of the vision and offer.

The aims of the college are to help and support students to plan and direct their own learning. They also cite as an important measure of success that all students leave the college to attend FE options of their choosing. There is no formal system for following up former students to see if they remain within education, employment or training but the college cites an external piece of follow-up research some while back which was positive in this regard.

The college report their emphasis to be on qualitative rather than quantitative measures of progress and attainment with students' personal development being the highest priority. They also state that building the confidence of learners is a key aim. While the college can cite cases where students and parents report an increase in confidence and other positive benefits from attendance at the SMLC, there is no formal system for setting a baseline in terms of measures of well-being or evaluating progress of groups of students over time against the baseline.

The college asks students to fill in a brief questionnaire when they arrive about their objectives and goals for their journey through the college and beyond. This forms the main baseline assessment and springboard for designing each student's personal timetable.

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Four such questionnaires were viewed during the conversation. The key goal cited by three of the four students centred on the need to acquire GCSEs, which seemed to raise a potential issue in terms of the aspirations of students as compared to the curriculum offer at the college. One of the students was reported to have achieved 9 A\* GCSEs via alternative routes. The fourth student had set a goal around developing musical ability. She had literacy difficulties and left with no accredited qualifications although the college felt in many ways her time had been successful developmentally and emotionally.

No formal assessment or review data on pupil performance was viewed but the staff meet very regularly for in-depth discussions about pupils and at these points, amendments to their programmes can be made if necessary.

The Head of SEN made the offer of a follow-up visit when the students were on-site to look further at provision and to meet students. This can be organised for later in the autumn term.

### **3. Child Protection and Safeguarding**

The SMLC currently have a Child Protection Policy which is appropriate and approved by East Sussex CC.

They were able to demonstrate that they ensure that any child protection concerns are recorded on an appropriate record of concern form and highlighted to Ian Cunningham. Each child, where there is a child protection concern, will have a file which is locked away.

The SMLC were able to show that they undertake CRB checks on staff but were not able to demonstrate that they undertake reference checks on volunteers. This has been highlighted as an area that needs addressing.

Appropriate child protection procedures are in place

All staff have received child protection training and this is repeated annually.

### **4. Conclusion**

The SMLC is aware that their model would not meet the rigorous standards set by Ofsted inspection and have made a conscious

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decision not to register as a school. However notwithstanding the merits of child-centred approaches in education, the lack of accredited routes in the curriculum for pupils, the relatively narrow curriculum offer, the lack of formal assessment and recording of outcomes for pupils and the part-time nature of the provision would make it unlikely that the LA would advocate placement at the SMLC.

The Head of SEN has offered to visit again on 30.9.13 to see the SMLC in action and will update a report on the provision with further observations at that point.