

Preparing for inspection Sunderland College



Who we are

Sunderland College is a large Further Education college, established over 120 years ago and spread over five sites. It has a wide range of students and courses, from Higher Education and Advanced Level study to adult and part time courses, and bespoke employer training.



Supported provider

Sunderland College:

- Jane Thompson, Head of Department

Improvement partner

Summations Ltd:

- Caryn Loftus, LSIS Associate

The department involved with the Support Programme delivers English and maths in the workplace. The provision predominantly leads to the adult certificates in English and maths at levels 1 and 2. Our team has been in place for almost 7 years and delivers approximately 1500 qualifications per year across a variety of employers including Npower, Barclays and Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust.

Barriers to excellence in the workplace

Tutors teaching Maths and English in the workplace face many barriers, often outside their control, to providing excellent teaching and learning. This led to some staff not performing as well as they usually would on inspection. An internal inspection was imminent, to be undertaken by staff from other departments who were unlikely to be aware of the barriers to delivery in the workplace.

Preparation for performance

The main aim of the support was to support the team in preparation for inspection so that they would approach it with confidence and perform to the best of their abilities leading to a grade reflecting the actual performance of the department. Therefore, the LSIS Associate met with the Head of Department to plan a session for staff to help them prepare for internal inspection. This drew on the expertise of the LSIS Associate in workplace maths and English delivery, and previous experience of helping providers prepare for inspection.

The continuous professional development (CPD) session, jointly run by the Head of Department and the LSIS Associate, explored the role of the internal inspector, sharing good practice in overcoming barriers to teaching maths and English in the workplace and identifying what makes an excellent maths and English tutor, based on Ofsted's "What Makes a Good Numeracy Tutor" document. In addition, the manager attended two peer exchange group meetings looking at maintaining/achieving an outstanding grade in maths.

During the CPD session, a background paper was drafted to be handed to the internal inspectors outlining the barriers tutors experience and the ways in which they try to overcome, or plan to mitigate, the effects. In addition, a checklist was developed for tutors to help them prepare for the internal inspection. The process of developing these documents empowered staff to feel that they had a way to present formally the measures that they knew they were undertaking to ensure an excellent learning experience. Our final documents are given below. The idea of a background paper and checklist to help prepare for inspection will be rolled out across all maths and English provision across the College. If this is successful, the approach will be recommended to other curriculum areas.

Building on success

The inspection took place and the team was awarded Grade 1, outstanding. Highlights include: 100% of the lesson observations graded good or better with one lesson graded outstanding; the inspection report commented on the range of differentiated and active learning activities delivered by the team; there were no areas for improvement identified in the internal inspection report. This showed considerable impact achieved from the CPD sessions, as some previous inspection observations had been judged grade 3.

Staff feedback

This time they did not have any problems with the inspectors not understanding how the workplace approach is different to that in the main college. They felt more able to show that they had contingencies in place and were able to discuss it with the inspectors, which previously they had felt unable to do.

Teaching Maths and English in the Workplace

Maths and English teachers who deliver in the workplace have identified the following barriers ways to overcome or plan to mitigate the effects:

Barriers that tutors might experience in the workplace	Ways that tutors try to overcome or plan to mitigate the effects
<p>1. Attendance Work commitments mean that sometimes it is difficult for students to be released to attend sessions Business needs come first, even for employers who are aware of the benefits of workplace learning</p>	<p>Realistic selling of courses to the employers Constraints recorded on session plan Class profile to record possible reasons for time-keeping/non-attendance</p>
<p>2. Differentiation Mixed ability groups due to funding constraints makes it difficult to meet individual needs 1:1 support no longer available</p>	<p>Detailed class profile Record differentiation</p>
<p>3. Feelings Confidence – lack of or too much Lack of confidentiality as peers are aware of each other's ability level which leads to embarrassment Fear Past experiences such as "I was told that I was thick."</p>	<p>Tutor is available at start and end of session Tutor provides re-assurance, is approachable, provides means for communication between sessions</p>
<p>4. Motivation Some learners are forced to attend Some come in own time so aren't paid Lack of employer commitment Don't think they need Maths and English skills for everyday situations as someone else will help them</p>	<p>Tutors aim to 'turn people round' who come lacking motivation through fun activities which highlight the benefits of improving Maths and English skills Company and project profile to include nature of programme and support offered by employer</p>
<p>5. Time Classes too short to provide a quality session and Courses too short due to constraints imposed by the employer</p>	<p>Tutors aim to make good use of time Work is offered for between sessions Feedback on homework may take place during session rather than at beginning to allow for late arrivals</p>
<p>6. Environment Venue might not be conducive to learning Limited resources, particularly IT</p>	<p>Tutors tailor session to the environment</p>

Maths and English in the Workplace – Excellence Checklist

An excellent Maths and English tutor in the workplace:

	In place ✓	Evidence/Source
<p>1. Planning individualised learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ has a very good understanding of the practical application of Maths and English in everyday and generic work contexts, as well as in specific vocational areas, where required ▪ explores the practical reasons why learners have returned to learning Maths and English, establishes areas of interest to which learning can be applied and makes these the core of the learning programme ▪ plans resources to suit learner group interests/hobbies previously identified 		
<p>2. Teaching strategies to overcome learners' fears</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ explores with each learner why he or she may have struggled with Maths and English in the past ▪ ensures that all individualised learning programmes identify and build on the skills that learners bring with them ▪ incorporates the Maths and English skills that learners may use every day, using workplace examples where appropriate. ▪ demonstrates empathy, ensures confidentiality and appropriate additional tutor support is available 		
<p>3. Addressing misconceptions and developing understanding of mathematical and English concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ has developed his or her own understanding of mathematical and English concepts beyond level 2 ▪ is very skilled at ensuring learners get to the root of any misconceptions they may have so that they understand where they go wrong and apply the correct reasoning in the future ▪ highlights the benefits of analysing incorrect answers to learners 		

<p>4. Involving all learners and developing their independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ uses different types of activity, such as group, pair or individual work to allow learners to explore mathematical problems or calculations and discuss English anomalies¹ to develop their understanding and confidence within given time constraints ▪ uses a wide range of resources, including information technology where available, to develop learners' ability to use their learning independently and in contexts that are relevant to them ▪ highlights the differences between English and American spelling and grammar and the drawbacks of reliance on automated spelling and grammar software 		
<p>5. Making Maths and English purposeful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ focuses on problem-solving and applying Maths and English to build learners' confidence in using it in everyday situations and at work and help them understand the practical purpose and application of each mathematical and English concept ▪ effectively uses paper-based and electronic worksheets ▪ uses a wide range of practical resources, including technology, in an imaginative way to develop numeracy skills that relate directly to those that learners use in everyday situations, at work or for personal projects or hobbies 		
<p>6. Assessing learners' progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ continuously assesses the progress of his or her learners during sessions, and quickly adjusts his or her teaching methods accordingly ▪ provides constructive feedback on learners' progress in understanding individual mathematical and specific English concepts, as well as their progress towards personal learning goals ▪ focuses on developing the relevant knowledge, skills and understanding learners need for their job; whilst ensuring that they are familiar with the end test 		

¹ For example, seasons of the year do not start with a capital letter

Extending the work and our networks

- A second CPD event was planned in response to the Skills Funding Agency guidance that Level 1 and 2 national tests for adults would shortly be out of funding. The focus of this event was to prepare for the move to functional skills. We developed our links through the peer exchange group
- Sunderland College have invited South Tyneside ACL, who were in the North East peer exchange group we had joined in order to look at maintaining outstanding provision, to a meeting with a provider of functional skills materials
- Following input at the first peer exchange group from an additional inspector the College have separated the maths and English areas in their recent re-structure
- Our involvement with the Support Programme has benefited our team and also impacted on wider College provision

Feedback

It came just at the right time and I don't know what I would have done without it.

- Head of Department