

# Leicester City Council

## Focused monitoring visit report

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## FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

### Context and focus of visit

Leicester City Council ('the Council') holds contracts with the East Midlands Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency to provide a range of apprenticeship qualifications, accredited courses and adult safeguarded learning for approximately 8,000 learners.

The population of Leicester is approximately 304,000. Some 40% of its population are from minority ethnic groups. Leicester is ranked as the 25th most deprived local authority in the country. Some 18% of the local working population do not have any formal qualifications, compared with the national average of 11.6%. The proportion of learners achieving five or more GCSEs at grade A\*-C, including English and mathematics is 52.1%, compared with the national average of 58.9% for 2011.

This monitoring visit follows the previous inspection in January 2009 at which inspectors judged overall effectiveness, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management to be good. The promotion of equality of opportunity was outstanding. Inspectors found provision to be good in three subject areas and outstanding in one. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

<b>How much progress has the Council made in its use of self-assessment and development planning to tackle the issues identified at the previous inspection?</b>	<b>Significant progress</b>
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The service's self-assessment process continues to be critical, honest and inclusive. Staff understand the Council's quality assurance and quality improvement procedures well. Managers use data well to monitor performance, retention and learners' achievements. Detailed curriculum level self-assessment reports receive regular and thorough scrutiny from senior managers. Curriculum managers and coordinators take full responsibility and ownership of curriculum-level self-assessment. Judgements in the self-assessment report are realistic and well supported by a wide range of evidence. Targets and actions plans are clear and measurable. Improvement plans clearly identify actions, timescales and responsibilities. The service makes good use of learner and stakeholder views to support self-assessment judgements and to improve the provision. The service understands its key strengths and areas for improvement well. Many improvement actions have already taken place and others are well within the challenging timescales. However, it is too soon to judge the full impact of all of the actions taken.

## Outcomes for learners

**How much progress has the Council made in improving outcomes for learners?**

**Reasonable progress**

The service continues to work highly effectively with a very wide range of partners throughout Leicester to improve employability and develop vocational skills for some of the most vulnerable people in the city. In 2010/11, the Council's partnership working helped to support some 1,242 people into sustainable employment. The vast majority of learners on non-accredited provision achieve their learning outcomes. Targets are realistic, measurable and individual. An appropriate moderation process is in place to ensure that standards remain high. Overall and timely success rates for the small number of learners on apprenticeship programmes are in line with national rates. Success rates on accredited courses in literacy and numeracy are generally at or just below national rates. Success rates on most programmes in English for speakers of other languages are below national rates, except for those in speaking and listening, which are generally satisfactory. Curriculum managers have identified the reasons for the poor performance of learners on these courses and there are some encouraging signs that success rates are increasing in 2011/12.

## Quality of provision

**How much progress has the Council made to ensure that learners benefit from an appropriately diverse and challenging range of teaching methods and strategies?**

**Significant progress**

At the previous inspection, inspectors found that the range of teaching methods used was too narrow. Tutors' lesson plans and schemes of work now incorporate a wide range of strategies for teaching and learning. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of different groups of learners. Learners greatly enjoy their learning and they appreciate the wide variety of activities and tasks in their lessons which tutors use very effectively to keep them engaged and interested.

The Council's team of observers uses the improved service-wide system of observation of teaching and learning well to identify areas of good practice, as well as areas for improvement. Observers provide highly detailed feedback to tutors which they then use to develop thorough and constructive action plans. Observers make good suggestions about how tutors can better use information learning technologies in lessons, such as the use of digital photography to help learners record their work and celebrate their success. The service provides regular and relevant training opportunities for staff and organises well-attended teaching and learning conferences to disseminate good practice in the classroom.

**How much progress has the Council made in using targets to support learners' progress and achievement? Significant progress**

Staff are highly aware of the service's overall targets for learner retention and attendance. Managers have introduced an additional detailed mid-term performance review to provide a more frequent and challenging process for monitoring the service's achievements against agreed criteria. However, some strategic action plans do not include sufficiently measurable success milestones to help managers assess their impact.

The systematic monitoring of target-setting for learners has improved through the extension of the observation of teaching and learning and quality assurance audit procedures. Curriculum managers have also strengthened the process for moderating and assessing the quality of targets and learning outcomes for learners on non-accredited courses. Individual learning plans contain detailed, accurate long and short-term learning and development targets. Tutors mark learners' work fairly and provide detailed feedback to help them clearly understand the progress they have made and what they have to do to achieve their learning goals.

**How much progress has the Council made in reinforcing learners' literacy and numeracy skills? Reasonable progress**

Service managers have worked hard to develop and manage an effective 'whole organisation approach' to the promotion of literacy and numeracy. The service has implemented a useful strategy to raise the skills, particularly in numeracy, of all staff, including those not directly involved in training and assessment of learners' work. A minority of tutors have achieved qualifications in the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

Initial advice and guidance effectively signposts prospective learners with low literacy or numeracy skills to discrete courses. The service provides good support for learners with dyslexia or dyscalculia. Tutors clearly link schemes of work to the core curriculum. Lesson plans have been standardised to ensure that tutors provide relevant links to literacy and numeracy across all areas of the provision. The service has improved initial assessment arrangements and clarified entry criteria for the vast majority of courses to ensure that learners have an appropriate level of skills in literacy and numeracy to succeed on their chosen course. However, in a very small minority of cases, course information sheets do not make sufficiently clear references to the literacy and numeracy skills required of prospective learners.

## **Leadership and management**

**How much progress has the Council made in rectifying the insufficiently thorough observation of teaching and learning process?**

**Significant progress**

The service has considerably strengthened its observation of teaching and learning process since the last inspection. The Council's team of observers has received thorough and regular training to help them identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Observers pay close attention to learning in the classroom, as well as to teaching strategies. A rigorous moderation process ensures that grades for teaching and learning are carefully scrutinised and realistic and supported well by judgements. Observation reports are exceptionally detailed and provide constructive and helpful advice for teachers to improve. Action planning for teachers is particularly thorough and well monitored subsequently by curriculum managers. Teachers say that the revised observation process has helped them to improve their practice. The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Grades given to learning sessions by the service's observers match those of inspectors. Observers pay appropriate attention to how effectively tutors promote equality and diversity and health and safety during learning sessions.

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