# Leicestershire County Council

## Local authority

| Inspection dates | | 08-12 October 2012 |
|---|---|---|
| **Overall effectiveness** | **This inspection:** | **Good-2** |
| | Previous inspection: | Good-2 |
| Outcomes for learners | | Good-2 |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | | Good-2 |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | | Good-2 |

## Summary of key findings for learners

### This provider is good because:

- The large majority of learners achieve their learning aims or qualifications whatever their chosen subject or learning method.
- The large numbers of learners who commence a programme with the service who do not have, or have low previous levels of, qualifications successfully improve their personal and employability skills.
- Much teaching, learning and assessment is good or better.
- The service places great attention on, and has very good procedures for, assessing and monitoring learners' progress and achievement so learners succeed in their main learning aim within planned timescales.
- Through good performance management systems Leicestershire County Council (the service) ensures that learners benefit from a well managed and continually improving adult learning service.

### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The quality of provision in modern foreign languages requires improvement.
- The percentage rate of learners who achieve and are successful in their learning and programme aims are not yet high enough.
- The service has not yet been able to ensure that enough teaching, learning and assessment are of a sufficiently high enough standard in order to be outstanding.
- Too many tutors lack the confidence to promote fully equality and diversity within lessons.

# Full report

# What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of provision in modern foreign languages by better identifying individual challenge for learners through closer and more appropriate target setting that is consistently well recorded. Ensure learning is sufficiently differentiated by increasing the range of teaching techniques particularly the use of technologies. Pay closer attention to detail of the assessment of the target language particularly in the correction of incorrect pronunciation.

- Raise overall success and achievement by identifying the programmes where rates are at or around national averages and taking improvement actions to raise these. Maintain the good rate of improvement in 2011/12 in classroom based learning. Ensure apprentices who are undertaking frameworks at advanced level succeed as well as those at intermediate level.

- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to good or better levels for all learners by ensuring tutors provide greater opportunities for learners to participate fully in the lesson or activity. Concentrate tutor professional development on improving questioning techniques and ensuring tutors use technology more frequently in their lessons to the meet the different needs of learners more closely.

- Increase the frequency of observations of teaching and learning where tutors are assessed as weak and use teaching assistants more effectively through better preparation and planning.

- Through increased and/or better use of advanced teaching practitioners support tutors to develop the confidence and the resources to integrate equality and diversity within the curriculum more effectively.

# Inspection judgements

| Outcomes for learners | Good |
|---|---|

- In 2011/12, overall most learners who commenced a programme with the service achieved their main programme learning aim. In particular the percentage of learners in classroom based provision improved on the previous year and rates are now good.

- Most learners following non-externally accredited programmes achieve their programme in line with national rates. Learners enjoy their learning and generally progress to further learning. However, targets set in modern foreign language programmes do not challenge the more able learners.

- Apprentice success rates are high at intermediate levels but below national rates at advanced levels. The advanced level success rates have been affected by economic downturn which has meant redeployment or redundancy for a significant minority of these apprentices. Apprentices achieve their framework within planned timescales at around the national rate.

- Many learners who commence learning with the service have either low level or few qualifications on entry as demonstrated by the large numbers of foundation learners. These learners progress well in their lessons and, on completion of their courses, to further learning.

- Attendance rates are good and many learners undertake additional learning in their own time for instance during holiday periods and at weekends. Apprentices are very keen to learn and take good responsibility for their own learning.

- The service has successfully narrowed the achievement gap between male and female learners during 2011/12. Learners with learning difficulties/disabilities achieve very well. However, the small number of Bangladeshi and Black African learners do not achieve as well as other learners.

- Learners living in areas of deprivation or experiencing economic social disadvantage are targeted by the service and their progression from short courses is monitored carefully and is good to a wide range of destinations; for example, paid and unpaid work and foundation learning programmes.

- Learners develop particularly good personal, social and employability skills in foundation, community and apprenticeship programmes. These learners quickly gain much improved levels of confidence and use their learning well to improve their economic well-being.

- Apprentices develop their functional skills well. The service has introduced a good system of off-the-job training supported by e-learning packages that is enabling the current high pass rates in this component of the apprenticeship framework.

- High numbers of learners progress to higher levels of learning. The service has strong arrangements for the provision of information, advice and guidance (IAG) and progression is particularly strong in community learning and foundation programmes.

| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good which supports the good levels of outcomes for most learners. Teachers' lesson planning is thorough and detailed leading to thoughtful lessons and good teaching. The service successfully recruits learners, supports them appropriately and the teaching overall meets the varying needs of learners' well. However teaching in a small minority of lessons does not always take sufficient account of the full range of individual learning needs and preferences.

- Tutors structure lessons well and aim to involve learners, build their confidence and stretch them in a positive way; they are largely successful in this. However a small minority of lessons are still too heavily led by tutors talking too much and not using probing and exploring questions sufficiently well. Activities set for learners are appropriate and engaging as whole class activities; while this leads to successful completion of tasks teachers place insufficient focus on developing or reinforcing the learning in modern foreign languages through interaction with others or use of technology.

- The service has made a significant investment in information learning technology (ILT) which has resulted in a well-used and popular virtual learning environment (VLE) that provides a good range of engaging and interesting ideas and resources for developing teaching and learning. Specialist learning coaches who are experienced in the use of ILT and developing learning resources support tutors well and have been instrumental in sharing good practice across the service. The actual use of ILT in the classroom by tutors varies and the consistency of its use is an area to be developed further by the service.

- A notable feature observed by inspectors was the way tutors build good relationships and rapport by their readiness to give extra help and respond to requests for support such as adapting materials. Feedback from learners shows they feel a sense of loyalty and affinity due to the care and guidance they receive and many are 'repeat/return' learners. Tutors are receptive to and readily adapt their teaching according to the views and experiences of learners expressed in their learning record.

- Tutors give good oral and written feedback on assessments and the structured planning for progression and next steps results in good progress. The constructive and encouraging assessment is a significant contributory factor to this.

- Assessment for apprentices is good. Tutors use a wide range of assessment methods that closely match the needs of the learners. These include the use of audio visual and e-assignments. A new e-assessment programme is particularly good at ensuring assessment and internal quality assessment is timely, detailed and improves performance.

- Target setting for progress is good overall and meaningful for learners though the level of challenge and consistency in the way targets are met and completed in a timely and systematic way is too variable.

- Initial assessment of learners' needs is thorough and done is a timely way to help learners settle comfortably into their courses and ensure that support is given for their learning at a personal level, for example in confidence building or with resources and specialist equipment.

- All learners have the opportunity of an initial diagnostic of their learning needs with strong emphasis placed, where appropriate, on the development of English, mathematics and functional skills. Identified needs are well met through carefully planned programmes which are accessible for all learners and support career and personal aims. The diagnostic assessment includes particularly good attention to developing learning programmes that make the appropriate adjustment for learners with disabilities.

- The service provides good information, advice and guidance for learners. Courses are well promoted through the service's intranet and through high quality hard copy literature. Community development workers are particularly good at promoting the work of the service in a personal context through very sound partnership working and extensive visits made to areas of high deprivation.

- Learners are positive about the help and support they receive and the enthusiasm of the tutors contributes much to their enjoyment of sessions. Tutors pay good attention to engage learners irrespective of their backgrounds and the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is satisfactory overall. However, this aspect requires improvement to be good as not all tutors have sufficient confidence to plan and maximise the promotion of equality and diversity sufficiently well enough within their sessions.

| **Modern foreign languages**<br><br>**Learning programmes for 19+** | Requires improvement |
|---|---|

- Teaching, learning and assessment overall require improvement, which reflects the satisfactory outcomes for learners. Learners remain well engaged in lessons, produce a good amount of homework and enjoy sharing knowledge and viewpoints either in the target language or in English. Tutors provide a safe and friendly learning environment and this helps learners develop confidence and collaborative work.

- Staff have good subject knowledge and the large majority have the target language as their first language. This is valued by learners who learn much about the target culture. However, a significant minority of teachers do not use sufficiently a variety of teaching methods to maximise skills development.

- In the best lessons, learners have good opportunities to practise full sentences, extend vocabulary and experience very effective group activities. These help learners develop pronunciation and tone of voice patterns in a safe environment. The extensive use of the target language in the vast majority of lessons, even when giving instructions in beginners' classes, helps learners build confidence and develop their listening skills.

- However, in the large majority of lessons, tutors talk too much resulting in too little space for learners to respond and practise speaking skills. In these weaker lessons, activities are too controlled with too few opportunities for learners to focus on accuracy, experiment through practice of freer speech or demonstrate understanding and knowledge. In a significant minority of lessons, some activities are not sufficiently well-designed or suitable to maximise practice of the target language.

- The use of ILT in the classroom remains underdeveloped even when interactive boards or other aids are available. Although, the large majority of tutors now use the virtual learning

environment effectively to share and develop materials and activities, tutors continue to be over-reliant on paper-based materials and do not use audio-visual aids enough to enliven learning in the classroom. Tutors use emails well to provide and send back homework to absent learners or to those who want to continue practising during holiday periods.

- Assessment is mostly satisfactory. Initial assessment is sufficiently thorough, well documented and used sufficiently well to plan learning. Tutors generally monitor learners' progress effectively in lessons and provide effective verbal and written feedback to learners. However, target setting with learners is not always sufficiently challenging, resulting in the more able learners rarely getting access to extended activities to stretch them fully.

- All learners are screened appropriately to identify additional learning needs at the start of their programme.Tutors provide effective support to learners with dyslexia, mobility and mental health issues.

- The programme offer responds well to local needs. Programmes include good progression routes, a good range of languages over a large number of venues, a large evening provision and learners have good access to the virtual learning environment for independent learning. The service has recently improved the availability of externally-accredited courses in this academic year.

- Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily in lessons through individualised personal support for learners. For example, tutors are pro-active in contacting absent learners and providing homework via emails to allow learners to catch up with missed work. However, opportunities are not always maximised in order to promote cultural awareness or linguistic diversity.

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| **Foundation English**<br>**Foundation mathematics**<br><br>**Learning programmes for 19+** | Good |

- Foundation English and mathematics teaching, learning and assessment are good which reflects the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications. Teachers create a welcoming atmosphere in their lessons which helps learners to gain confidence and complete literacy and numeracy tasks successfully. For many learners this is their first successful learning experience.

- Tutors are well qualified and experienced. They make good use of information gained during professional development programmes, for instance lessons and materials were recently adapted well to ensure learners are well prepared for the new functional skills exams.

- The overall planning of programmes is good and meets the needs of learners well. Community development workers in outreach locations effectively identify learners' learning needs and encourage them to take up learning opportunities in English and mathematics classes. Learners are given helpful information on possible progression routes.

- Tutors plan their courses well to meet the wide range of learner needs following a detailed initial and diagnostic assessment. Learners use their learning plans to record their learning effectively and have a good understanding of what they need to do to progress towards achieving their learning goal. However, the learning targets are not always relevant to the reading; writing or numerical tasks learners need to perform in their daily lives.

- Tutors plan their lessons well and ensure that learners participate in a range of activities that will interest them and lessons start with fun activities that review previous learning, put learners at ease and encourage them to work together. When moving on to a new topic tutors give clear explanations. However, in most lesson plans tutors place too much emphasis on their teaching activity without focusing sufficiently on what learners will learn by completing the tasks and how this will lead to them achieving the planned learning outcome.

- Tutors prepare topical and differentiated learning materials that are well presented and stimulate learners' interest. However, much of it is paper based and insufficient use is made of ILT to support learning or further encourage learners' interest in, access to, and use of, technology.

- Tutors set high expectations of learners and provide opportunities for them to work independently. They give learners homework that is marked promptly and encourage them to access specific websites that will help them to develop further their skills in English or mathematics. English learners are encouraged to make good use of dictionaries in tasks which focus on extending their vocabulary.

- Learners receive good care and individual support in lessons from tutors and volunteers who work well together. Tutors give volunteers clear instructions and prepare specific materials which they can use with learners. Volunteers are screened appropriately before appointment but although they receive support from a coordinator, they do not receive any specific training.

- Staff have very effective strategies in place to recruit hard-to-reach learners and to meet their specific needs. Tutors offer assessments for dyslexia and make appropriate adaptations to their learning materials to help learners. However, there is insufficient evidence in course and lesson plans that tutors actively promote the understanding of equality and diversity through their lessons.

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| **Family learning**<br><br>**Learning programmes for 19+**<br>**Community learning** | Good |

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, which reflects the good outcomes for the subject area. Achievement of learning goals, pass rates on national tests and the progression of learners from family learning programmes to further learning and employment are all high.

- The good teaching and learning includes a wide range of activities and tasks that are very effective in motivating and challenging learners. For example, learners are particularly enthused by learning about the phonic approach and the related technical language used to teaching reading that is used in their children's schools. Tutors monitor learners' progress during lessons well and use probing questions very effectively to recap learning and assess the achievement of lesson objectives.

- Support for learners is very strong. The service actively targets learners who are from the most disadvantaged groups, many of whom have significant personal and learning support needs. Staff identify and meet support needs very well.

- Tutors prepare and adapt learning materials to ensure that resources are interesting and relevant. Practical activities and games are often used very effectively to demonstrate the way in which parents can make learning fun for their children. ILT is available in some lessons, where tutors use it satisfactorily although in others; opportunities to use it are too limited.

- Tutors plan lessons well using information gained through an initial assessment of learners' starting points. Individual learning plans containing relevant and challenging targets are prepared and agreed although tutors do not always promote the completion of these documents in a motivating and engaging way. Learners find the task tedious and do not fully appreciate its importance.

- Tutors encourage independent learning well, both during lessons and through work set to do at home. For example, where appropriate, tutors direct learners to websites for further information to consolidate and extend their learning. Tutors mark homework promptly and constructively

and learners know what they have to do to improve; however, in a minority of instances, errors in learners' writing are not corrected.

- The development of learners' English and mathematics and language skills is good on all courses, including those where they are not the primary aim. For example, learners' measuring skills were very effectively improved in a creative crafts lesson where fabric was being prepared for curtain making. Language support is provided where necessary and inspectors saw some good examples of learners working well to support their peers.

- Learners receive very good information and guidance from their tutors and community development workers. This enables learners to receive prompt and personalised advice on progression routes to next steps in learning.

- The careful planning of teaching and learning enable tutors to meet individual needs and to foster and build an excellent rapport with their learners and promotes equality of opportunity.

| The effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
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- Following a major restructure about six months before the inspection, the service now has a well-articulated and shared vision which promotes high expectations for staff and learners. These expectations are used effectively to set challenging targets for learners and staff. The service ensures that staff have clear lines of responsibility and that they are clear about what they have to do to make improvements.

- Senior staff manage performance robustly but fairly, through strict adherence to well-written policies. Annual appraisal for substantive staff ensures that they retain a focus on the quality of provision in their curriculum area and that managers identify their training and development needs. Staff training and development is clear and linked well to appraisals, targets and performance.

- Regular and detailed reviews ensure that staff have a good knowledge of the progress of their learners. Recent strengthening of procedures for tracking learners' progress and achievement have contributed to improved success rates for the large majority of learners. This has also contributed well to improved rates of progress for the majority of learners.

- Arrangements for monitoring and raising the standard of teaching, learning and assessment are good. Observation of teaching and learning result in challenging action plans which help tutors to improve. The service's observation grades broadly reflect the quality of teaching and learning observed by inspectors.

- Staff are well-qualified and experienced. Subject learning coaches in each curriculum area provide good mentoring support for tutors to help them improve their teaching practice. Staff are enthusiastic; they use their knowledge and expertise well to help the majority of learners achieve their learning goals.

- Self-assessment is inclusive, critical and largely accurate. Curriculum coordinators and managers use tutor-completed annual course reviews well to support curriculum self-assessment judgements. Managers incorporate learner views effectively into this process.

- The service uses the findings from stakeholder surveys to plan and implement improvements, which it monitors well and to ensure that learners' experience improves. However, the service is less effective in gathering and using the views of employers. Quality assurance arrangements have helped the service to raise overall success rates in 2011/12 following a slight dip in 2010/11.

- The extent to which staff at all levels make use of performance data to manage and plan the curriculum, previously an area for improvement, is now improved. The service has invested in a new software package that has enabled it to produce detailed monthly reports for managers identifying learner retention, achievement and success. However, not all managers are equally proficient at independently accessing and using this data.

- The service's good promotion of equality and diversity ensures that learners from a range of disadvantaged communities in the county receive an opportunity to benefit from learning. The service has worked particularly well with partner agencies such as the Job Centre and the national health service to offer programmes to improve employability and health and well-being. It has taken effective actions to identify and minimise differences in performance between different groups of learners and carries out detailed equality impact assessments when implementing new polices and procedures.

- Staff awareness of equality and diversity is satisfactory. However, inspectors found little integration of equalities topics during learning sessions, even in curriculum areas which lend themselves well to the celebration of diversity. Tutors often lack the confidence to develop effective learning materials that they can use effectively to promote and celebrate the range of languages and cultures in the county.

- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. The service has good safeguarding arrangements and it has a comprehensive policy, which reflects that of the council. All staff have received appropriate training and the designated officers have received enhanced training.

- Health and safety and risk assessments of learning venues are satisfactory. The service has detailed e-safety guidance booklets and learners feel safe and are clear about what to do or who to contact if an issue arises. Learners with disabilities benefit from thoughtful learning activities that promote road safety, healthy eating and how to stay safe when using the internet.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

| Leicestershire County Council | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:**<br><br>1: Outstanding<br>2: Good<br>3: Requires improvement<br>4: Inadequate | **Overall** | 14-16 Learning programmes | 16-18 Learning programmes | 19+ Learning programmes | Apprenticeships | Other work-based learning | Employability | Foundation Learning | Community learning |
| **Overall effectiveness** | 2 | | | 2 | 2 | | | | 2 |
| Outcomes for learners | 2 | | | 2 | 2 | | | | 2 |
| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment | 2 | | | 2 | 2 | | | | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management | 2 | | | 2 | 2 | | | | 2 |

| Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Grade |
|---|---|
| **Modern foreign languages** | **3** |
| **Foundation English and mathematics** | 2 |
| **Family Learning** | 2 |

# Provider details

| Provider name | |
|---|---|
| **Type of provider** | Local authority |
| **Age range of learners** | 16+ |
| **Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year** | Full-time: 321 |
| | Part-time: 7,045 |
| **Assistant Director** | Heather Broughton |
| **Date of previous inspection** | November 2008 |
| **Website address** | www.leics.gov.uk/golearn |

| Provider information at the time of the inspection | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Main course or learning programme level** | **Level 1 or below** | | **Level 2** | | **Level 3** | | **Level 4 and above** | |
| **Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)** | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ |
| **Full-time** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| **Part-time** | 23 | 3,426 | 5 | 792 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |

| Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age | **Intermediate** | | **Advanced** | | **Higher** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ |
| | 17 | 51 | 5 | 91 | N/A | N/A |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Number of learners aged 14-16** | N/A |
| **Number of community learners** | 2,300 |
| **Number of employability learners** | N/A |
| **Funding received from** | Skills Funding Agency (SFA) |
| **At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:** | ▪ none |

## Additional socio-economic information

The Adult Learning Service of Leicestershire County Council operates throughout the county and has its main sites in the most populated areas. The population is predominently white British but is becoming more ethnically diverse and has a significant Asian/Asian British community. The proportion of the population that is unemployed is lower than that nationally by approximately five percentage points. However, the percentage of the population of Leicestershire who do not have any qualifcations is 10 percentage points higher than national rates.

## Information about this inspection

| **Lead inspector** | Maxine Mayer HMI |
| --- | --- |

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the standards, funding and quality improvement manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

# What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement |
|---|---|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012

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