

Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Local authority

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| Inspection dates | | 27–30 November 2012 |
| Overall effectiveness | This inspection: | Good-2 |
| | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement-3 |
| 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 adult learners achieve their learning aims or qualifications. Learners with low starting points successfully improve their personal and employability skills and the majority progress to further courses.
- Apprentices are highly successful in achieving their frameworks within the planned duration of the programme. Foundation learners progress well to further education, training or employment.
- Most teaching, learning and assessment is good or better.
- The quality of information, advice and guidance is very good
- Through good leadership and management Stoke-on-Trent City Council (the service) has raised standards since the last inspection and the good management of subcontractors is helping to reach the most disadvantaged learners; they are building capacity to provide learning.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Aspects of teaching, learning and assessment in the family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) programmes require improvement.
- The proportion of adult learners who achieve and are successful in their learning aims is not yet high enough.
- The service has not yet ensured that enough teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in non-accredited provision, are of a sufficiently high standard to be outstanding.
- Equality and diversity are not promoted well enough within lessons.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of provision in FLLN by improving the individual challenge for learners through better target-setting and more individualised learning activities. Further develop the range of teaching techniques and improve the quality and frequency of the on-going assessment.
- Raise overall success and achievement by identifying the programmes where retention rates are low or are around national averages and undertaking further staff development actions to raise these.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all tutors continue the programme of staff development in improving classroom practice particularly in the use of technology. Ensure that improvement actions identified in lesson observations are swiftly followed up by all managers.
- Ensure that all tutors consistently apply the procedures for using results of initial assessment to plan learning effectively and that learners' records of prior and current achievements are documented and used well for assessment purposes.
- Improve the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons by ensuring that all tutors receive the recently improved training and that the lesson observers measure the impact of teaching and learning in this aspect.

Inspection judgements

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

- Outcomes for learners across the provision are good. A very large majority of learners in community learning programmes who stay to the end of their programme successfully achieve their qualifications or learning aims. A large majority of foundation learners progress to further education, training or employment and are mainly successful in achieving their qualifications. A high number of apprentices succeed in gaining their framework qualifications within the planned timescales of their programme.
- While remaining at a satisfactory level given the low starting points and prior achievement of learners in community learning programmes, retention rates dipped in 2011/12. The service quickly dealt with this and rates for the similar period in 2012/13 show early indications of significant improvement on the previous year. In particular, the service has much improved initial assessment, marketing information materials and information, advice and guidance.
- The service is successfully narrowing the achievement and success rates of different groups of learners. It carefully positions its service and courses in geographical areas within the city in most need and for those local residents who have not traditionally engaged in learning. The difference in performance of various groups of learners is negligible with the exception of learners in family literacy, language and numeracy programmes.
- Learners develop good personal, social and employability skills. The standard of learners' work is high in community learning programmes and courses promote the acquisition of skills that improve employability, for example, in producing work of a saleable commercial quality in craft-based courses. Learners in introductory programmes quickly gain in confidence.
- Learners in Foundation Learning programmes and apprenticeship programmes demonstrate good workplace skills and progress well in their work-experience and jobs. Their employability skills are improved and their aspirations raised.

- The progression of learners is good and the service places a strong emphasis on this in all aspects of its work. In particular, learners on entry level programmes progress well to courses of further learning either in different subjects, higher levels or to discrete English and mathematics courses. They use their skills to further their employment prospects, improve their family life and/or undertake voluntary work.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which supports the good levels of outcomes for most learners. The service and its staff promote courses to local residents well and have high expectations that local residents, particularly those in difficult personal circumstances will engage in learning programmes. This ambition is successfully achieved particularly through the good work of the community engagement officers and learning champions.
- Tutors plan their lessons well in community learning and Foundation Learning programmes and these plans are mostly informed by good initial assessment which includes assessment of additional support needs. However, in family literacy, language and mathematics and a small minority of subject areas this aspect requires further improvement. In most lessons tutors do not use information learning technology well to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Learning is good. During classes tutors set high standards for their courses and support learners well to achieve the best possible learning outcomes. Tutors are knowledgeable about their subject and use their enthusiasm to develop the skills of learners well, which further aids their progression. The service creates learning environments which promote a good culture of peer learning in which learners support each other and extend their learning.
- The process for the recognition and recording of prior achievement in non-accredited courses is an example of best practice. The moderation of the records is sound and based securely on evidence. The large majority of tutors use the documentation and procedures well to engage with learners, gain their feedback, plan further learning and record their progress and achievement against the planned learning aims of the course. However, the service has recognised that further staff training is required for a small minority of tutors.
- Assessment within non-accredited and accredited programmes is good. Tutors assess non-accredited achievement in each session and learners understand the progress they are making with some minor exceptions. Assessment in accredited programmes uses a good range of methods and meets the awarding body standards.
- In all community learning programmes, tutors pay good attention to the need to develop learners' English, mathematics and functional skills alongside the main course learning aims. Signposting to further learning in order to develop these skills further is particularly good. However, in approximately a third of family literacy and numeracy courses learners are not achieving well.
- The service provides very good information, advice and guidance to all learners. Well qualified community engagement officers work closely with the most disadvantaged learners and visit all courses. All courses place an emphasis on further learning and foundation learners are given excellent advice regarding progression routes. The service has access to and uses well the expertise of the Jobs, Enterprise and Training Team to offer good advice to learners who are seeking employment.
- The service has a strong ethos and culture of respect and dignity, particularly in programme areas where learners are most challenging. Equality and diversity are promoted well in pre-course materials and learner handbooks. Where they are promoted well in lessons, tutors plan their lessons to maximise opportunities to develop learners' understanding of respect and diversity of others. But too many tutors do not undertake this activity well enough.

Visual Arts

Community learning

Good

- Teaching and learning are mostly good or better, which is reflected in the good and improving outcomes for learners, their skills development and progress on non-accredited courses. In the better sessions learners benefit from perceptive guidance and support given to them by their well-qualified tutors. The service demonstrates that many learners progress to other courses.
- Good quality demonstrations and up-to date colourful hand-outs are used to inspire the learner. As a result learners acquire the confidence to work independently and make good progress from sometimes low starting points. In sewing, Christmas crafts, jewellery and photography the work produced is highly creative and quite often of commercial quality.
- Initial assessment is used well to identify additional needs and starting points. Target-setting is individual and challenging and lesson plans show planning for the individual needs of learners. The use of assessment in a small minority of lessons is inconsistent.
- A small minority of sessions are too tutor led, targets are not sufficiently individualised, on-going assessment is informal and the individual learning plans are not completed to show the learners' progress as tutors and learners do not understand the importance of completing the assessment paperwork.
- Tutors promote good working relationships in classes that develop the social and personal skills of learners and help in the production of very creative work. Learners exhibit and sell their work, resulting in an increased confidence in their skills. Peer learning is strong. The learners are very supportive of each other and benefit from peer critiques and discussions about techniques.
- Many learners are so motivated that they continue to work at home developing their skills. Learners are well supported and enjoy their sessions. Specialist advice and guidance from knowledgeable tutors is particularly good.
- The use of information learning technology in classroom sessions to enhance learning is insufficient. Tutors do not make enough use of opportunities for research and professional presentations or to illustrate key points. Most learners do not have the opportunity to use new technologies as such facilities are not available.
- English and mathematics are integrated successfully into sessions. For example, numeracy is well promoted in sewing and Christmas crafts, by accurately calculating the required amount of materials to use on a project. Feedback to learners on their progress in their individual learning plans is well thought-out and constructive.
- Equality and diversity are not promoted sufficiently in the curriculum. Tutors do not refer often enough to other cultures in schemes of work or lesson notes to broaden learners' horizons or to encourage participation in discussion. Some initiatives to encourage more males to attend have been successful and in many sessions observed there was a good gender mix.

Family learning

Community learning

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good in wider family learning programmes, which are predominantly offered as non-accredited short courses and individual workshops. This is reflected in the very good achievements, improved opportunities for parents to spend time with their children, the acquisition of increased levels of confidence and progression rates to further learning. In a small minority of school venues, sessions are disrupted by school activities.
- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement in FLLN courses, which has led to the relatively low retention rate and the significant variation of both achievement and retention

across different groups and centres. The service has recognised this and recently returned the delivery of these courses from sub-contracted to in-house provision. The accuracy of the achievement and progression rate for learners on non-accredited learning is uncertain as the quality of recording of achievement and progression is inconsistent across the provision.

- Staff have high expectations for learners and most learners are highly motivated to develop their skills. In FLLN programmes learners are strongly encouraged to achieve qualifications in English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and to progress on to other learning. In 2011/12, nearly half of the learners took and achieved national qualifications in English, mathematics and ESOL. In most sessions, learners benefit from good individual support during their classes which enables them to make appropriate progress.
- The assessment and recording of progress towards individual targets are inconsistent. The outcomes of initial assessment are not effectively used to set specific targets for learners and, in many instances, targets are insufficiently specific. All learners have an individual learning plan based on initial assessment but these are not sufficiently aligned with course planning and are not used effectively to monitor progress.
- Assessment and feedback to learners entering for national qualifications are good. Learners receive effective individual support and guidance from tutors on how they need to improve further to achieve a qualification. Many learners speak positively about their increased confidence as a result of constructive assessment feedback from their tutors.
- The quality of teaching to enable learners to develop their English, mathematics and language skills is too variable in FLLN programmes. In the majority of sessions, innovative and creative learning activities and relevant contexts and themes for learning motivate learners and enhance their skills. However, in many sessions, tutors use too narrow a range of learning activities with an over-dependence on the use of worksheets and insufficient focus on developing skills to enable learners to support their children's learning and, in ESOL classes, to develop their confidence in speaking English.
- Information, advice and guidance are highly effective in enabling learners to progress from introductory courses to other provision within the service. In 2011/12, nearly half of the learners undertook more than one course and about a third of FLLN learners progressed on to other types of courses within the service. Information, advice and guidance are an integral part of course planning and FLLN learners also benefit from visits by staff from the local college who advise on potential progression routes to the college.
- Teaching, learning and assessment promote an ethos of inclusion and equality. All learners are encouraged to participate fully in sessions. Staff are aware of and respond to specific individual needs including parents' child-care responsibilities and the needs of learners with disabilities. However, cultural diversity is insufficiently promoted in lessons as tutors fail to design learning activities and use resources that draw on and reflect the range of cultural backgrounds of learners.

Foundation Learning Learning programmes for 16-18

Good

- The quality of the teaching and learning is mostly good, leads to good outcomes and particularly good progression to further education, training or employment. Tutors are well qualified and experienced. Their teaching is lively and the lessons proceed at a good pace. Learners are offered a variety of learning strategies, which provide opportunities for them to develop their employability skills, although a few lessons are too tutor-led and offer too little challenge for the more-able learners.
- Support and care for learners are good. Tutors are friendly, approachable and professional. They act as good role models and are keen for their learners to do well. This inspires learners to

achieve. Tutors provide good levels of personal and on-programme support for learners and source additional support through external agencies when required.

- Initial assessment is thorough in identifying learners' starting points and support needs. Learners' literacy and numeracy needs are accurately identified through basic-skills assessments and an in-depth interview assesses their aptitude for the course. However, the individual learner's starting point is not always sufficiently used to inform and plan their future learning needs. This means that individual learning plans are often too generic to meet fully the learner's needs.
- Assessment of learning is generally good. Tutors use a good range of assessment methods to monitor learners' progress. This includes observations, written work, activities and question and answer sessions. Tutors generally provide good verbal and written feedback to learners about their completed work that helps them progress. However, learners are not sufficiently encouraged to reflect on and assess the skills and knowledge they develop to consolidate their learning.
- Target-setting is good for learners' overall programme goals and during work-experience. Learners are set personal and programme targets by their tutors in their individual learning plans. These targets are sufficiently detailed to enable the learner to understand what they need to do to achieve their learning aims. In some cases, tutors do not always set sufficiently focused interim targets to help the learner with the small steps they need to make in their on-going progress.
- Functional skills are taught well throughout the curriculum. All learners follow functional skill programmes in English, mathematics and information and communication technology, which tutors integrate within the teaching of the main learning programme. However, learners do not always recognise the value of these skills in gaining employment. Some tutors support further improvements in learners' written work by routinely correcting their spelling and grammatical errors.
- Tutors have developed particularly good working relationships with a range of employers. All learners undertake a work placement as an essential part of their programme. Tutors work with employers to match work-based opportunities with individual learners' needs. Employers are familiar with the learning requirements of the programme and provide very good workplace experiences for learners. Tutors and employers work closely together to monitor learners' progress at work and provide the necessary support for them to succeed.
- Learners benefit from regular well-focused guidance provided by tutors about their progression opportunities. Tutors provide learners with very good advice and guidance about additional qualifications, training and employment opportunities. Tutors have strong relationships with the apprenticeship programmes and learners benefit from working with programme tutors in learning and assessment situations. This motivates learners to aspire to further training and employment.
- Tutors encourage good working and social relationships between learners in their groups and many learners receive effective equality and diversity training from employers during their workplace inductions. However, the majority of tutors do not sufficiently integrate the promotion of equality and diversity within lessons to further promote, highlight or reinforce specific equality and diversity issues in the context of the curriculum.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The service is highly successful in meeting its mission to provide high-quality learning opportunities to engage people to enrich their lives and improve their skills, knowledge, qualifications and job prospects. The service provides good quality teaching and learning leading to good outcomes. All tutors, partners and managers at all levels share this mission fully and they work well together to make a significant difference to the lives of the local community.

- Senior managers responsible for the service are highly knowledgeable and passionate about the service. They provide strong challenge, scrutiny and support to the staff teams. They seek regular reports and evaluate the impact of the service. Since the previous inspection, the service has successfully improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment from satisfactory to mostly good or better.
- The management of subcontractors is strong. Managers provide high-quality support and expect high standards. In case of any failings they take robust action to withdraw contracts, for example, they terminated the contract of a large provider at the end of the last academic year due to the poor performance of FLLN programmes.
- The majority of staff are well qualified and experienced. The service has provided an appropriate range of information technology resources for tutors' use; however, due to security restrictions of the council tutors are unable to make full use of these.
- Staff development is good and has improved the awareness and skill levels of tutors. However, the service has not provided enough high-quality staff training focused on improving learning in the classroom. Aspects such as the confident use of technology, lesson planning, classroom management and the reinforcement of equality and diversity within lessons require improvement.
- Self-evaluation of the learning provision is thorough. Tutors and partners conduct a detailed analysis of their provision after examining a broad range of evidence. The reports are detailed, accurate and self-critical and focus clearly on improving the provision and outcomes for learners. Self-evaluation by tutors is a model of good practice and a key tool for quality improvement.
- The improvements in the provision are highly sustainable. Weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been remedied and some, such as the procedures for the recognition and recording of prior achievement and the use of data, are now strengths. Quality improvement is now thorough and has led to substantial improvements in outcomes for learners, the Foundation Learning programme and safeguarding. Support for learners is also now much improved and is good.
- Observers conduct regular observations of all tutors and correctly identify the strengths and areas for improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. Inspectors' judgements and grades matched closely with the service's grades. However, a few observers focus insufficiently on measuring learning and assessment and a few managers do not follow up action plans after the observations rigorously enough to ensure improvements.
- The service uses an extensive range of intelligence from its staff, partners and schools to identify needs and gaps in the provision. The range of short courses is extensive and recruits and engages learners well. Courses are flexible and held at convenient times and in local venues that are easily accessible to learners and where they feel safe.
- Foundation Learning and apprenticeship programmes fulfil a critically important role for the most disengaged learners. These prepare them well for work with local employers in sports and business administration. Through strong links with the local employers many learners progress from Foundation Learning to apprenticeship programmes, achieving high-level skills, qualifications and employment.
- The service works very closely with organisations that work with excluded groups very successfully and has succeeded in attracting a high percentage of learners from minority ethnic groups. However, the service has not been able to maintain its momentum to tailor its provision to meet the specific identified needs of Asian groups. The service does not currently have any employed members of staff from minority ethnic groups in the community engagement team.
- Tutors demonstrate good understanding of equality and diversity as well as issues of discrimination, bullying and harassment. Learners feel welcome and respected. But not all tutors are fully confident in promoting equality and diversity in lessons. Learning resources that reflect diversity topics are insufficient.
- The service meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners and gives high priority to safeguarding and health and safety. Staff and designated officers have outstanding levels of

awareness of issues of child protection and the risks to adults in vulnerable situations and use their knowledge well to protect learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Stoke-on-Trent City Council

| Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate | Overall | Foundation Learning | Community learning |
|---|---------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Overall effectiveness | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Outcomes for learners | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management | 2 | 2 | 2 |

| Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Grade |
|---|-------|
| Visual Arts | 2 |
| Family learning | 3 |
| Foundation Learning | 2 |

Provider details

| Stoke-on-Trent City Council | |
|--|------------------|
| Type of provider | Local authority |
| Age range of learners | 16+ |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | Full-time: 93 |
| | Part-time: 5,204 |
| Assistant Director | Alison Knight |
| Date of previous inspection | April 2009 |
| Website address | www.stoke.gov.uk |

| 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 | 21 | 1 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Part-time | N/A | 1,285 | N/A | N/A | 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+ | | |
| | 23 | 14 | 11 | 15 | N/A | N/A | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Number of learners aged 14-16 | N/A | | | | | | | |
| Number of community learners | 1,285 | | | | | | | |
| Number of employability learners | N/A | | | | | | | |
| Funding received from | Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency | | | | | | | |
| At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Burslem School of Art■ Changes Health and Wellbeing■ CMS City Music Service■ dDeaflinks■ Groundwork West Midlands■ Landau■ Stoke-on-Trent City Council – Potteries Museum and Art Gallery■ Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire YMCA■ Staffordshire Wildlife Trust | | | | | | | |

Additional socio-economic information

The Community Learning Service of Stoke-on-Trent City Council operates throughout the city at over 150 different venues. The vast majority of programmes offered by the service are at entry and foundation levels. The population is predominantly 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 higher than that nationally by approximately two percentage points. The percentage of the adult population of Stoke-on-Trent who do not have any qualifications is seven percentage points higher than national rates and overall school achievement is low.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Maxine Mayer HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the strategic 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. 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 concentrating on family literacy, language and numeracy, which is the most substantive part of the family learning subject area.

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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