

# Staffordshire County Council

## Local authority

<b>Inspection dates</b>		<b>19 - 23 November 2012</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Outstanding-1

## Summary of key findings for learners

### This provider is good because:

- Learners develop good personal, social and employability skills.
- Good teaching, training and assessment ensure that the very large majority of learners successfully complete their learning programmes or apprenticeships.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good, with outstanding features. Tutors plan sessions carefully to include a good range of practical and interactive activities that involve learners fully and make learning interesting and relevant.
- Well-qualified and dedicated tutors provide high quality support to help learners achieve.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior leaders and managers provide particularly strong leadership to ensure that the service offers relevant and high quality provision to meet the needs of the county's diverse communities.

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

- Though outcomes for the very large majority of learners are good or better, they are not yet consistently outstanding.
- Not enough teaching and learning is outstanding.

## Full report

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

- Further improve outcomes by ensuring that all tutors set clear and achievable personal targets that stretch and challenge learners.
- Increase the proportion of lessons that are outstanding by:
  - sharing the very best practice in teaching and learning and ensuring that this is then consolidated in lessons across the curriculum
  - ensuring that tutors make better use of the available information and learning technology (ILT) resources to enhance further the quality of learning sessions.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- The proportion of learners who achieve their learning outcomes is high, as acknowledged in Staffordshire County Council's (the service's) self-assessment report. Retention on most courses is very good. Apprentices following programmes in training to provide learning support have very high success rates and the proportion who achieve within planned timescales is also high.
- Current learners are making good progress. Information and communication technology (ICT) learners develop skills to help them shop online, send and receive emails, use the internet and apply for jobs online. Learners on community learning programmes make good progress from their starting points and gain confidence and personal and social skills.
- The service's thorough analysis of achievement, success and retention across the range of curriculum areas reveals that no significant performance differences exist between groups of learners. The service's contract managers rigorously monitor subcontracted provision to identify quickly any dips in performance so that they can take prompt actions to deal with them. As a result, learners benefit from provision that is consistently good across all of the subcontracted provision.
- The service is successful in recruiting a high proportion of learners who have not participated in a learning programme since they left school. Good partnership with the Job Centre has led the service to offer a large number of ICT and English language courses for jobseekers in community venues across the county. Learners gain valuable employability and job search skills.
- Tutors provide good support to improve learners' English and mathematics skills. Learners become confident in applying literacy and numeracy in the home and work context. They also develop sound personal learning and thinking skills which help them to become confident and independent employees.
- Progression onto higher level courses, employment, training or further education is generally good. The service has begun to improve the accuracy of its data on learner destinations. Individual case studies show that many learners progress from very low starting points before proceeding to a range of further and higher level courses which considerably improves their personal and emotional well-being, as well as their employability.

**The quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Good

- Managers, tutors and assessors have high expectations of their learners. They provide good quality care and support and they work hard to motivate learners to achieve their learning objectives. Outcomes for the very large majority of learners are good.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good in all subject areas, with some aspects that are outstanding. Well-qualified and enthusiastic tutors make good use of their curriculum expertise to plan and teach high quality lessons that actively engage all learners, especially in visual arts and training to provide learning support. Learning activities are carefully selected, relevant and exciting, which help learners to complete tasks successfully and develop new skills.
- Tutors provide high levels of personal and academic support. They regularly check the progress that learners are making and encourage them to produce high standards of written and practical work. In a very small minority of learning sessions, tutors do not use the available ILT resources to enhance further the quality of the session. In workplace learning, well qualified and knowledgeable staff make use of challenging questions to stretch learners and develop their critical reflection and problem solving skills.
- Initial assessment is effective in matching learners to programmes that meet their needs and abilities. The results of initial assessment are generally used well to set challenging targets in individual learning plans. Most learners progress well.
- Procedures for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement in non-accredited learning are generally satisfactory. Individual learning plans record learners' objectives and tutors regularly review and record learners' progress towards achievement. However, in a very small minority of cases, tutors produce a set of generic targets for the whole class and a few learners are insufficiently stretched or challenged.
- Learners receive good quality constructive feedback on their work that helps them to understand what they have to do to achieve. This enables them to understand and make progress towards their learning goals while gaining in confidence and acquiring new skills and knowledge. Apprentices receive constructive feedback on their written work that helps them to improve further.
- Teaching and learning are very effective in developing learners' English and mathematics skills, particularly in ICT and in visual arts. In the better sessions, tutors use an innovative range of learning activities to help learners improve their English and mathematics. In workplace learning, tutors integrate key and functional skills successfully with apprenticeship training.
- Learners receive good quality information, advice and guidance. Tutors provide prospective learners with clear and accurate advice on course content and suitability. Apprentices receive clear guidance on how their apprenticeship programme is structured and the options available to them upon completion.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum is particularly good in ICT and in training to provide learning support, but generally satisfactory overall. Learners have an appropriate understanding of equalities that tutors reinforce at induction and during the programme. Learners treat each other with respect and support each other well during learning sessions.

**ICT for users****Community learning**

Good

- Teaching and learning are good, as reflected in the high proportion of learners who achieve all of their learning outcomes. Learners enjoy their learning and demonstrate good development of ICT skills such as using email, moving and editing text within documents and creating Christmas cards and photographic images using proprietary software.
- Highly motivated tutors with good technical knowledge plan and teach lessons well. The availability of current industry software and of individual workstations for learners supports tutors to produce high quality sessions. Tutors use a wide range of interactive learning methods that helps to keep learners engaged and interested. Tutors are very supportive, closely monitoring learners' tasks while actively encouraging them to work towards achievement of all of their learning goals.
- Effective initial assessment methods help tutors to gain useful information about learners' mathematics and English skills. They use this information to plan learning and support activities to help learners achieve. Tutors carry out useful interim and final course reviews to give them an accurate record of learners' progress and achievement of course outcomes.
- Tutors encourage learners to set appropriate individual learning goals relevant to the course content and the outcomes they wish to gain. Learners benefit from reflecting on these at the start and at the end of the course in order to assess their progress and achievement. However, in a small minority of cases, individual learning plans contain insufficiently individualised learning outcomes.
- Learners receive constructive and detailed verbal feedback on their work. This helps them to understand the progress they have made as well as what they have to do to achieve. Supportive feedback helps learners to gain in confidence while acquiring new skills and knowledge.
- Enthusiastic tutors integrate opportunities for learners to practice and improve their literacy and numeracy skills effectively during learning sessions. For example, tutors use activities related to online shopping tasks and writing emails to friends and family to promote skills in mathematics and English. One tutor skilfully integrated an activity involving the manipulation of rows and columns in a table with an exercise involving the listing of adjectives, antonyms and synonyms.
- Staff provide good quality information, advice and guidance for all learners. Tutors provide clear advice to prospective learners on course content and suitability of the course. Advice and guidance is available throughout the course and all learners receive detailed information in the final week of their course about opportunities for progression.
- Tutors promote equality and diversity well. The service has recently incorporated a learning outcome related to equality and diversity into all of its provision for non-accredited programmes, which helps tutors to integrate equalities topics with the curriculum. Induction covers key equalities issues effectively. Where necessary, tutors provide an appropriate range of specialist equipment and resources to help learners achieve.

**Visual arts****Community learning**

Good

- Good quality teaching and learning, some of it outstanding, reflects the good outcomes. The standard of learners' work is good and often outstanding, especially in sculpture, pottery and sewing. Many learners progress successfully into further and higher education.
- Tutors use particularly effective teaching strategies to challenge all learners to achieve their learning goals. They use skilful questioning techniques that value learners' personal experience and knowledge and promote productive discussions. Many tutors use very good demonstrations to stimulate learners' understanding of visual arts.
- Learners make good progress and new learners gain skills and techniques rapidly to carry out complex tasks. For example learners on sewing courses progress quickly from a low starting point to being able to use complex cutting and sewing techniques. In the better learning sessions, learners are sufficiently motivated that they continue to practice and develop their skills at home. Tutors make themselves very accessible to learners, who receive good help and guidance.
- Initial and on-going assessment is good. Most tutors make good use of individual learning plans so that, by the end of the course, learners are able to understand the progress they have made relative to their starting point and the skills they have gained. In a very small minority of cases, individual learning plans do not record learners' progress or achievements accurately.
- Learners exhibit and sell work at local galleries and take part in many valuable enrichment activities. They take advantage of information provided by tutors about significant or particularly relevant arts exhibitions to arrange visits to see them. Five learners have recently been selected to exhibit their work at a prestigious art exhibition this year.
- Well-qualified tutors provide good quality specialist advice and guidance on all aspects of the visual arts industry. Attendance and punctuality are good. Learners receive good support and enjoy the benefits of learning.
- Tutors generally use ILT effectively to illustrate key points and to provide visual illustrations. However, a few tutors lack the confidence to make full use of the available ILT resources to enhance learning in innovative or imaginative ways.
- Tutors promote learners' English and mathematics skills well. For example, tutors encourage learners to calculate the correct amounts of fabric required in sewing classes and, in sculpture and pottery, to determine dimensions, volumes and proportions.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is generally satisfactory. Learners from a diverse range of backgrounds attend visual arts classes and they work with each other effectively and productively. However, tutors do not explore the visual arts traditions of other cultures sufficiently to broaden learners' understanding and horizons.

## Training to provide learning support

### Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, with some outstanding features, as reflected in the very good outcomes achieved. Well qualified and knowledgeable staff plan on- and off-the-job training carefully. Group sessions provide valuable opportunities for learners to broaden their understanding of others' work contexts. Tutors challenging use of questions to encourage critical reflection and problem solving is a particularly strong feature of the most successful sessions.
- The very good support provided by tutors and assessors through teaching, progress reviews and individual coaching enables learners to demonstrate high standards of professional practice and achieve their qualifications within the planned timescale. Tutors encourage advanced apprentices who have not previously benefited from off-the-job training to extend their previous learning further by attending selected intermediate level training sessions.
- Learners show, during their training and through written assignments, a very good understanding of best workplace practice in supporting children in schools. This includes a sound knowledge of safe working practices including the relevant legislation, and the ability to manage children's behaviour effectively in the classroom.
- The service's staff work effectively with partner schools to provide coherent provision. The involvement of school staff in mentoring learners and attending progress reviews helps to ensure a close integration between on- and off-the-job training.
- Tutors provide frequent opportunities during group sessions for learners to develop their key and functional skills. For example, one learner demonstrated very good development of ICT skills to support an oral presentation to the rest of the group. Assessors check and comment on the accuracy of written assignments and encourage learners to proof-read and correct their work.
- Tutors carry out a thorough initial assessment to identify learners' English, mathematics and ICT skills, as well as any additional needs, and to discuss their future career aspirations. However, they do not always use this information sufficiently well to set individual targets.
- Assessors monitor learners' overall progress well through regular visits to the workplace. They give apprentices constructive feedback on their written work and indicate clearly how they can improve further. Well managed individual and group tasks enable learners to demonstrate and extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Trainers and assessors offer good information, advice and guidance. The thorough selection procedures, clear briefings on assignments and information and guidance provided prior to finishing the programme help to support the high rate of learner progression into employment, further training and higher education.
- Trainers and assessors promote equality and diversity well. During progress reviews they invite learners to select from a range of topics, such as cultural diversity, and relate this to their own workplace situation. They also encourage learners to reflect on equality and diversity issues through written assignments and during learning sessions, such as planning a safe and appropriate classroom environment for children with special educational needs.

**Community learning****Community learning**

Good

- Learners receive clear group and individual targets and achieve their learning outcomes well. They make good progress, develop very effective personal, social and employability skills and significantly increase in self-confidence. Though many learners progress onto higher level programmes or into employment or training, the service does not currently have accurate destination data for all learners who leave their programme.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Tutors are skilled and experienced and use their expertise well in the planning and delivery of interesting and stimulating learning. This both enthuses and engages learners who are well-motivated and work productively in lessons.
- Tutors make very effective use of ILT, as well as of a very wide range of challenging learning activities and tasks, that support the development of learners' skills very effectively. One-to-one coaching is good and provides learners with individual attention that meets their learning needs well. In a small minority of lessons however, more able learners in mixed level groups are insufficiently challenged and do not receive enough opportunities to extend their learning.
- Initial assessment identifies clearly learners' starting points and support needs and tutors pay good attention to helping learners identify and overcome their barriers to learning . Learners receive good advice on personal and learning issues. The use of support workers in lessons, for example in English language classes, is very effective in providing additional support for learners.
- Assessment of learning is generally good. All learners identify individual learning goals and targets in individual learning plans, that they regularly review and update. Tutors and learners regularly assess learners' progress and achievement and learners are clear about the individual progress that they are making. In a small minority of lessons, tutors rely too much on learners' self-assessment of their starting and finishing points, instead of applying more robust criteria to assess learners' progress and achievement.
- The development of learners' skills in English and mathematics is satisfactory. However, tutors do not always maximise opportunities to integrate these skills effectively with other learning. For example, in one lesson the tutor missed clear opportunities to integrate a discussion about number with an activity in which learners were using music technology to produce their own rhythmic drum beats.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in learning sessions is satisfactory. However, not all tutors are equally adept at integrating equalities issues with topics taught during sessions. Staff place a strong and effective emphasis on ensuring that learners demonstrate respect for each other and for staff in lessons, regardless of their different backgrounds, ages or abilities.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Outstanding

- The service is very strongly committed to achieving excellence in learning and skills. The council's senior members have a very good understanding of the significant contribution community and work-based learning makes to the well-being and economic prosperity of the people of Staffordshire. They have a thorough understanding of the provision and provide clear and robust support for curriculum teams.



- Senior leaders are responsible for the significant and well managed changes to the organisation of the provision in recent years. Managers are making significant progress in firmly establishing the new arrangements and improving the quality of the provision. Training and consultations with staff and other stakeholders ensure that everyone understands the service's priorities and commitment to the development of community learning in the county.
- The service's development of the range of provision is excellent. Managers plan the curriculum carefully following a very thorough needs analysis to identify the most significant areas where provision is necessary. The service offers a very wide range of high quality programmes in accessible local venues throughout the county that contribute extremely well to meeting the council's strategic priorities.
- Managers organise the service's commissioning and contracting arrangements very well to ensure that subcontractors receive clear guidance and effective monitoring. Contract managers use a particularly well devised quality framework to carry out regular performance monitoring of the provision delivered by subcontractors, as well as by the service's own direct delivery unit. The strong focus on ensuring that learners receive consistently good provision means that all learners benefit regardless of whether they are taught by one of the subcontractors or directly by the service.
- Senior council members and senior managers provide particularly effective oversight of the provision through regular performance updates. The service uses data very well to provide detailed management information to monitor learners' performance and make quality improvements. Managers at all levels make excellent use of data to understand how well the service is performing.
- The service's arrangements to assess the quality of teaching, learning and assessment activities are rigorous and the standards expected of tutors are high. These are assessed very well through observations and classroom visits; the resulting action plans are relevant and lead effectively to improvements. Managers gain valuable feedback from learners during classroom visits and have made considerable progress in improving learner engagement and the usefulness of individual learning plans, for example, through the development of innovative approaches to recording learners' progress and achievements.
- Performance management of subcontractors and their staff is demanding. In directly delivered provision, supportive appraisals provide a robust framework for the performance management of staff. A programme of high quality staff development provides effective support for staff to make improvements to their professional practice.
- Self-assessment is a thorough, inclusive and critical process. Managers make extensive use of performance data and of stakeholder feedback to evaluate the quality of provision. Senior leaders and managers have a very accurate understanding of the service's key strengths and areas for improvement.
- Self-assessment reports from subcontractors and from the service's direct delivery unit receive highly effective internal and external validation. Quality improvement plans receive careful scrutiny during termly monitoring meetings. Subcontractors and direct delivery units benefit from the service's quality improvement activities, including the sharing of good practice, which the service arranges through well-attended network meetings.
- The service's actions to widen participation are excellent. Learners from a very wide range of social and economic backgrounds attend service provision at the very good range of well-equipped venues across the county. The proportion of learners currently on programmes who have not previously benefited from adult learning is high.
- The service actively promotes equality and diversity. It reinforces subcontractors' responsibilities for promoting equality and diversity through contracting arrangements. Recent staff development has much improved most tutors' confidence to integrate equality and diversity into their teaching and learning. The service's equality and diversity action plan is good, although a few outcome measures are insufficiently specific.



- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Staff and designated officers receive appropriate training and are clear about their responsibilities. The service gives appropriate priority to safeguarding and health and safety at learner induction, during the learning programme and at staff meetings.
- The service's procedures for evaluating health and safety arrangements during the procurement of services and contract management are good. However, these do not include fully the risk assessments completed by subcontractors.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>ICT for users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Visual Arts</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Training to provide learning support</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Community learning</b>	<b>2</b>

## Provider details

Staffordshire County Council	
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: N/A
	Part-time: 15,121
Principal/CEO	Mr Nick Bell
Date of previous inspection	February 2009
Website address	<a href="http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk">http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk</a>

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+
<b>Full-time</b>	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
<b>Part-time</b>	N/A	14,887	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	48
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	57	61	4	34	N/A	N/A		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	14,935							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Burton and South Derbyshire College</li> <li>■ University of Derby/Leek College Campus</li> <li>■ Cerebral Palsy- Mid Staffordshire</li> <li>■ Chase Council for Voluntary Services</li> <li>■ Newcastle-Under-Lyme College</li> <li>■ Pertemps People Development Group</li> <li>■ South Staffordshire College</li> <li>■ Stafford College</li> <li>■ Stafford District Voluntary Service</li> </ul>							

- Workers' Educational Association.

In addition, the provider contracts with 24 smaller subcontractors.

## Additional socio-economic information

Staffordshire is a large county with approximately 800,000 residents. Multiple deprivation in the county is concentrated in the larger towns and former coalfield communities. About 73,000 of Staffordshire's residents live in the 20 per cent most deprived areas in England, as measured by the Indices of Deprivation. The proportion of adults with qualifications below intermediate level or without a qualification at all, is similar to national averages, but significantly higher in the districts of Tamworth and Cannock Chase. The proportion of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs, including mathematics and English at Grade A\* to C, is 56.5%, which is slightly lower than the national average. The minority ethnic population in the region is slightly lower than in the rest of the country.

## Information about this inspection

<b>Lead inspector</b>	Jai Sharda HMI
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Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Quality 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, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers. 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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