

West Berkshire Adult and Community Learning Service

Inspection dates		4-6 December 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

Local authority

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Learners' achievement is consistently good. Learners attain their personal goals well.
- Learners significantly enhance their personal and social well-being, their quality of life and successfully extend their practical knowledge and skills.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. They ensure that learners make good progress.
- During a period of uncertainty, leaders and managers have maintained a good level of performance. They have ensured that teaching, learning and assessment meet the needs of learners effectively and learners enjoy a good quality experience.
- The service engages a wide range of vulnerable learners through an outstanding range of courses delivered through other providers who are well placed to reach these groups.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Not enough teaching and learning are outstanding. Observations of teaching do not focus sufficiently on the learning taking place.
- Individual learning plans do not record consistently the personal learning goals of learners, and tutors do not use these well enough to monitor their learners' progress.
- The service is not able to track the destinations of all learners outside its own provision and cannot judge securely how well learners progress to their next steps.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Raise the standards of teaching and learning further by improving the rigour of observations of teaching so that they focus on the learning taking place.
- Ensure that individual learning plans consistently record the personal aims and plans of learners and use these routinely to monitor their progress.
- Develop ways to track the next steps that learners take when they have completed courses so that judgements on their progression are based on secure evidence.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Outcomes for learners are good. Learners achieve their learning goals well. They attend regularly and successfully complete their courses. This is reflected in the consistently very high success rates across the largely externally non-accredited provision.▪ In family learning sessions parents develop knowledge of the early years curriculum well and are better able to support their children's development through using imaginative play activities. Their children learn to play independently and constructively, become more interested in reading and extend their vocabulary.▪ Learners greatly enjoy attending sessions. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities take pride in their work and gain great satisfaction when completing new tasks.▪ Learners develop their functional skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills successfully. Those on ICT programmes make rapid progress in reading and writing while they gain simple word processing skills.▪ The new skills acquired enable learners to manage their own affairs more successfully and apply their skills well in their daily lives. For example, one learner used his new-found writing skills to claim a tax refund successfully. Learners with disabilities develop greater independence and confidence in, for example, using public transport.▪ Many learners, including those who are older and vulnerable, gain vital social benefits from learning; attendance at sessions is a high point in their week. They develop important social networks and become less isolated as a result of engaging with others.▪ Those who are new to learning or have had negative experiences of education are engaged very well through interesting courses and programmes. They develop a thirst for learning, a sense of achievement and increase their aspirations and skills for employment.▪ Managers routinely monitor the achievement of different groups of learners. Their monitoring shows that learners achieve good outcomes consistently and there are no gaps in achievement regardless of the background of learners.▪ Many learners successfully progress onto further learning, employment and secure positive next steps, including volunteering. However, the service has not yet been able to track the destinations of all learners outside its own provision and reliable data are not therefore available in this area.	
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and is reflected in the good outcomes that learners achieve. Teaching is consistently good and supports learners well to reach their goals.

- Tutors quickly develop excellent relationships with the learners and create a safe and stimulating environment where learners feel at ease to participate. The high expectations of tutors and careful planning ensure that sessions are matched well to the needs and interests of learners. Subsequently, they attain well and make good progress during sessions.
- Tutors are well qualified, experienced and demonstrate good subject knowledge. The best teaching ensures that learners rapidly acquire new knowledge and skills and are able to apply these to their daily lives.
- Tutors assess most learners' individual needs carefully at the start of courses and make effective use of this information to plan activities that meet their needs well.
- Too many learning plans do not contain enough information on the individual goals of learners. Where target setting is used well, it helps learners develop the confidence to achieve their learning goals. However, targets and the personal goals of learners are not always sufficiently detailed or recorded well enough to help them make progress.
- Feedback to learners in sessions helps them to make good progress. In creative writing classes learners read their work to their peers and receive sensitive and constructive criticism to help them reflect on their work. In family learning, tutors model good communication and positive behaviour that help parents interact more effectively with their children.
- Tutors promote equality and diversity effectively in sessions. Learners are introduced to new cultural activities and tutors use the everyday experiences of learners well to explore different perspectives.
- The use of resources to support teaching and learning is good. In family learning tutors use digital photographs of learners' own recipe books and sculptures to consolidate their learning. However, in a minority of sessions the use of resources is unimaginative.

Community learning

Community learning

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Tutors are well qualified, experienced and enthusiastic. They set high expectations for their learners when planning programmes and sessions and make a significant contribution to the very high success rates that learners achieve.
- Tutors prepare challenging and enjoyable activities that are well matched to learners' individual abilities and interests. They display high energy levels in sessions and use a good variety of active learning strategies that engage successfully even the most reluctant and nervous learners.
- Learners on computer courses quickly acquire the skills to conquer the more challenging features of spreadsheet design. Others are using their new skills in their homes and workplaces.
- Tutors create and maintain good relationships with their learners and use humour appropriately to reduce tension or when encouraging risk taking. All learners are well supported. Tutors routinely show sensitivity when dealing with learners with mental health issues to achieve well.
- Learners enjoy their learning and appreciate the good progress they make, often over a short period of time. They attend well and are punctual. More vulnerable learners, many of whom had disrupted and unproductive experiences at school, re-engage with education successfully.
- On most courses, initial assessment accurately identifies the starting points of learners. In addition, tutors encourage learners to identify what they would like to achieve by the end of the course. However, procedures for assessing the starting points of the more vulnerable foundation level learners are not well established and their specific needs are not sufficiently identified. A

few tutors do not use mid-term reviews routinely to monitor how well learners are achieving their curriculum targets.

- The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is good. Although most courses are very short, opportunities to explore relevant issues that have an impact on the lives of the learners are exploited well by tutors. Tutors skilfully use the current and past experiences of learners to explore diversity issues that affect their lives.

Family learning

Community learning

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which is reflected in the good progress that learners make and the significant effect that their learning has on their lives. Tutors and other staff use their experience very effectively to support parents in developing their knowledge and skills. Tutors use their knowledge of learners skilfully and use questioning well. This ensures a personalised learning experience for individuals. They successfully develop learners' understanding by making relevant references to their individual family experiences and break down their sense of isolation by helping learners to support and learn from each other.
- A good range of learning activities and resources keeps learners' interests alive. Learning resources are stimulating. However, a few tutors do not always use ICT imaginatively enough and a minority of sessions do not have enough variety of activities.
- The use of individual learning plans to monitor the progress of learners requires improvement. Learners who lack confidence are encouraged effectively to identify their own starting points, personal goals and progress against course outcomes. However, too often learning plans completed by tutors are incomplete and learners' personal goals are not always recorded.
- Tutors listen carefully to learners' contributions and use verbal feedback well to encourage further efforts. They give carefully considered feedback on written work that helps learners to recognise what they need to do to improve further.
- Good teaching, learning and assessment ensure that learners develop their functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT well. Tutors integrate functional skills into sessions effectively.
- Information, advice and guidance on the next steps that learners take are built successfully into programmes. This is supplemented at some centres with termly visits from the careers service to groups and individuals. A very attractive leaflet of courses offered by Newbury College helps learners to choose their next steps.
- Tutors promote equality and diversity well in sessions and regularly refer to practices in a variety of cultures. Teaching meets the specific needs of target groups well, such as on courses that support parents with children with special needs.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers set out a clear and widely understood vision and strategy for adult and community learning. Managers ensure that the provision successfully reflects this vision to meet local needs. Despite much uncertainty about the future status of adult and community learning in the local authority, leaders and managers have secured improvements and a good level of performance has been maintained.
- The well-conceived subcontracting model of provision enables the service to engage successfully with hard to reach learners. Support for small subcontractors, to build their capacity to deliver learning programmes, is outstanding. Through good subcontracted provision, learners have access to a wide range of learning programmes and excellent specialist resources and facilities.

- Leaders and managers have high expectations for learners that bring rigour to teaching, learning and assessment in small and large subcontractors alike, including those new to adult learning. Instances of poor performance are tackled successfully. Routine monitoring of the performance of providers ensures that good standards are consistently maintained.
- Managers regularly observe teaching and learning sessions and understand the key strengths and areas for improvement. However, a minority of observers over grade the sessions and do not focus on the learning and progress that individuals make. Where tutors are not performing to the expected standards managers intervene appropriately.
- Leaders and managers have been successful in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Consistent standards of performance have been developed and implemented effectively to ensure that learners achieve well.
- Quality improvement planning is successful. Managers implement their plans effectively to secure continuous improvements across the service. Learner numbers are increasing and the service is highly successful in engaging those new to learning. Self-assessment captures the strengths and areas for further improvement appropriately but is not sufficiently succinct.
- The service regularly gathers the views of users through course reviews, evaluations and learner satisfaction surveys. Good examples such as parish consultations have shaped the curriculum on offer in local areas.
- A good focus on equality and diversity has ensured that target groups are engaged in learning effectively and achieving well. Vulnerable and target groups, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, older learners and those who are unemployed, participate very well.
- The service has developed provision for those in rural areas well. Carefully considered and innovative programmes ensure that the specific needs of learners are responded to very well, such as safe use of public transport for learners with a disability and home energy conservation for older learners.
- The health and safety of learners are effectively promoted. Learning takes place in safe environments. Routine monitoring of provision ensures that health and safety are prioritised and managed effectively and complaints and instances of harassment and bullying are dealt with appropriately. The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

West Berkshire Adult and Community Learning

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Community learning	2
Family Learning	2

Provider details

West Berkshire Adult and Community Learning	
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: 2145
Principal	Mrs Sara Hanson
Date of previous inspection	January 2007
Website address	www.westberks.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	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	8	774	0	13	0	8	0	0
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age								
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	803							
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:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Newbury College ▪ Workers' Educational Association ▪ Community Council For Berkshire ▪ Turning Point ▪ Five a day ▪ Parenting Special Children ▪ The Newbury Community Resource Centre Limited ▪ Watermill Theatre ▪ West Berkshire Mencap ▪ Link-Up 							

Additional socio-economic information

West Berkshire Adult and Community Learning service is situated in Newbury in the heart of West Berkshire. The area is largely rural, covering 272 square miles, and has a population of 154,100. West Berkshire is an affluent area and is ranked as the 39th least deprived district in England on the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation. Average incomes in West Berkshire are 14% higher than the national average. A minority of wards however, particularly in Newbury, are characterised by relatively high numbers of adults who are unemployed, low income families and high rates of crime. Over one fifth of adults do not hold a level 2 level qualification, whilst a third of adults hold a level 4 qualification.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Jon Bowman HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the principal officer for adult and community learning 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; 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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