Thurrock Adult Community College
Local authority

Inspection dates		12–15 February 2013
Overall effectiveness	**This inspection:**	**Good-2**
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-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 very large majority of learners achieve their learning aims or qualification.

- Learners make rapid progress and develop good personal, social and employability skills.

- Teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good. Highly committed and motivated tutors plan and teach sessions that engage and enthuse learners.

- Senior leaders and managers have high expectations of staff and learners. Performance management arrangements are highly effective in improving quality and raising standards.

- Quality improvement arrangements are particularly successful in raising the overall quality of provision.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Outcomes for learners are not yet consistently and significantly above national averages.

- Not enough teaching and learning is yet outstanding.

- Links with local businesses to extend progression routes into employment for learners are not yet sufficiently established.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the current trend of improving outcomes for learners by continuing to apply rigorous performance management and quality improvement processes.
- 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 all learners gain the skills to learn independently.
- Create productive links with more local businesses to extend progression routes into employment for learners.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good

- Outcomes for learners are good overall, as recognised in Thurrock Adult Community College's (the college) self-assessment report. Success rates on the large majority of courses leading to a qualification have risen in the last three years and are now above national rates, in some cases significantly above. The proportion of learners on non-accredited courses who achieve their learning outcomes is high. Learners' good achievements are reflected in the high standards of work they produce.

- Current learners make good progress. The progress and achievement of learners on non-accredited courses is consistently good, as recorded in their individual learning plans. Learners on programmes in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) develop good speaking and listening skills. Parents on family learning programmes improve their parenting skills and develop good study skills that enable them to help their children with school work. Initiatives to improve attendance rates have been largely successful, particularly in family learning.

- Managers' thorough and accurate analysis of achievement, success and retention across the range of curriculum areas reveals that no significant performance differences exist between groups of learners. The small disparities that occasionally arise, such as the slightly lower success rates for male learners, are swiftly identified and dealt with. Consequently, learners benefit from provision that is consistently good.

- Learners develop good personal, social and employability skills. Learners in English, mathematics, ESOL and family learning develop skills in teamwork, volunteering and gain vocationally relevant additional qualifications. Learners on information and communication technology (ICT) courses gain confidence in using computers to send and receive emails and become informed about how to help their children stay safe when surfing the internet. Family learning learners gain confidence to talk to teachers about their child's progress at school.

- Progression onto higher level courses, employment, training or further education is generally good. The college has begun to improve the accuracy of its data on learner destinations, particularly for those learners who progress onto other college provision. This data shows that internal progression for learners on English, mathematics, ESOL and family learning programmes is good. However, data on learners who progress to courses at other providers is incomplete. The college's partnership with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) to support ESOL learners with developing employability skills has been successful in securing employment opportunities.

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

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. The college's tutors and managers provide high levels of engagement, care and support for learners. Tutors provide good support for learners to help them overcome barriers to learning and most become highly motivated to achieve. As a consequence, outcomes for the large majority of learners are good.

- Well-qualified and experienced staff plan and deliver sessions that are exciting, challenging and engaging. Lesson plans and schemes of work are clear, detailed and most pay close attention to individual learners' needs. Most tutors make good use of volunteers and support workers to help learners make progress in lessons. The college's robust arrangements for observation of teaching and learning have contributed significantly to improvements in the overall quality of learning.

- All learners receive an appropriate initial assessment to help staff to determine the most suitable course and level for each learner. As a result, most learners are on a course that matches their needs, abilities and interests. Tutors make good use of the outcomes of initial assessment to plan learning to meet individual needs. Individual learning plans are used effectively to monitor learners' progress and to set realistic and manageable targets which help learners to achieve.

- Tutors provide constructive, detailed and useful feedback on learners' work that helps them to understand what they have to do to achieve. Learners on non-accredited courses complete a booklet that records their achievement of individual and group learning outcomes that they review regularly. However, a few tutors do not write sufficiently individual feedback on learners' work or fail to record the feedback in a format that learners can use.

- Tutors integrate literacy and numeracy effectively with the taught curriculum. They work hard to ensure that learners develop appropriate skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. However, a few tutors are insufficiently confident to integrate literacy and numeracy skills with their subject or to correct errors in learners' work.

- Learners receive good quality information, advice and guidance to help them choose the right course. Tutors provide clear advice on the options available to learners for further study either at the college or elsewhere.

- Tutors integrate equality and diversity effectively with the curriculum. Learners learn about different faiths, communities and cultures during sessions in ICT and ESOL. All classes have very clear ground rules about appropriate behaviour and language in the classroom. Learners treat each with respect and courtesy during sessions.

| **ICT for users**

Learning programmes for 19+
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 learning and demonstrate good development of ICT skills such as improved awareness of online safety of their children, how to buy goods and services on the internet and how to use proprietary software packages.

- Highly motivating tutors, with good technical knowledge, plan and teach lessons well. The college's use of an adapted 'learning bus' enables it to provide high quality learning in different locations across the borough in areas where few other opportunities exist. The bus is equipped with current industry software and individual workstations for learners. Tutors use interactive

learning methods to keep learners engaged. For example, learners use an interactive voting button to record their learning in a fun way.

- Effective initial assessment gives tutors useful information about learners' numeracy, literacy and ICT skills. They use this information carefully to guide learners to an appropriate course to enable them to gain skills and succeed. However, though tutors use the outcomes of initial assessment to help them plan learners' development of ICT skills, they are generally less successful at using this information to support learners' literacy and numeracy.

- Tutors negotiate with learners to set appropriate individual learning goals that are relevant to the course content and the outcomes that learners wish to gain. These are captured on the individual learning plans that are reviewed by tutors and learners at the end of each session. This is effective in enabling learners to benefit from reflecting on their skills and on the progress they are making.

- Learners benefit from detailed verbal and written feedback on their work. From this, they understand the progress they have made as well as what they need to do to improve. As a result of this supportive feedback, learners gain confidence while acquiring new skills and knowledge.

- Opportunities for learners to practise and improve their literacy and numeracy skills are broadly satisfactory. In better lessons, tutors support learners well, for example a Russian learner uses a specialist website to aid her pronunciation. Another tutor skilfully integrates the manipulation of text and the spelling of words with an exercise using drop down menus.

- Resources to support learning are good. ICT teaching rooms are well-resourced. Tutors develop good paper-based materials to aid learning in lessons and to extend learning beyond the class room. However, the college's virtual learning environment is not yet sufficiently established, which limits learners' access to online materials when they are not in college.

- Staff provide useful and relevant information, advice and guidance. Tutors provide clear advice to prospective learners on course content and purpose. Honest advice and guidance is available throughout the course and learners receive detailed information in the final week of their course about opportunities for progression.

- Tutors promote equality, diversity and inclusion well in lessons. For example in a lesson about online safety, learners are introduced to faith-based internet filters that enable parents to limit their children' exposure to unsuitable material. Tutors focus on key equalities issues effectively, for example, by devising session on cultural celebrations, such as the Chinese New Year.

Foundation English and mathematics and ESOL Learning programmes for 19+ Community learning	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, as reflected in the good outcomes for learners. Attendance has improved considerably in recent years and is now good. Success rates on accredited courses are above national rates and most learners on non-accredited courses achieve their learning goals.

- Learners achieve and make good progress in well planned and inspiring lessons. They share new ideas in discussion topics, skim and scan text to find meaning, practise correct grammar in conversation and devise their own mathematical problems for others to solve.

- Learners improve their ability to work productively on their own and extend their learning outside the classroom. They use homework and internet resources to practise and learn independently. Mathematics tutors set activities that are relevant to learners' everyday lives.

One learner used her improved mathematics skills to find the most competitive household utilities supplier for her home, helping her to better manage her family budget.

- Experienced and well qualified tutors structure lessons to help learners improve their economic independence and to become more active citizens. For example, literacy learners produce clear, concise and well-presented letters to help them find work. A course developed in partnership with a national employer helped unemployed ESOL learners to gain employment.

- A wide range of learning tasks increases learners' interest and enjoyment. Activities build on previous learning and many classes combine literacy and numeracy effectively with language development. For example, in a mathematics class, learners improved their understanding of the vocabulary used in weights and measures to help them buy the correct quantity of cooking ingredients.

- Assessment is good. Frequent and particularly effective questioning in lessons tests how well learners progress and challenges them to correct their work. However, marking of learners' work too often consists of comments that praise the learners' efforts rather than of constructive advice to help them improve their work. Though tutors make good use of volunteers in lessons, some volunteers are over-enthusiastic and do not give learners sufficient opportunity to find their own solution to problems or tasks set.

- Tutors carry out a range of initial assessments and use the outcomes of these well to plan appropriate individually tailored programmes. They give careful consideration to learners' reasons for study. Consequently, targets are linked well to the application of learning rather than to simply passing the course.

- The college gives a high priority to English and mathematics in its curriculum offer. Enthusiastic tutors support learners to improve their skills in relevant lessons designed, for example, to help them become self-employed or to learn more about getting a job or volunteering. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of how improving their skills in English and mathematics can help them reach their goals.

- Tutors and careers staff provide clear and good quality information and advice to help learners make decisions about future learning. For example, a careers advisor from a local college attends a mathematics class to talk about higher level courses. Tutors promptly contact learners that fail to attend. In most cases, absent learners are effectively supported to return to class.

- The promotion of equality and diversity in teaching and learning is good. Learners willingly share their cultural values and show respect for the views of others. Tutors challenge discriminatory language where it occurs and celebrate difference and diversity well. Tutors select lesson activities and plan support to enable learners of all abilities achieve.

Family learning	
Learning programmes for 19+ **Community learning**	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which reflects the positive outcomes for learners such as their increased confidence to support their children's learning, and the development of their own literacy and numeracy skills. One group of learners used their knowledge of new approaches to mathematics teaching to plan a successful end of course party with entertaining games that reinforced their children's understanding and use of basic number and shape.

- Tutors have good skills and expertise that they use effectively to provide creative lessons that capture learners' interest. They involve learners well in developing exciting learning materials. For example, parents with children who were reluctant to write, were encouraged to help their children design and build a car that could carry an egg down a ramp. Through this activity, both

parents and children developed successfully their skills of basic scientific evaluation by recording their approaches to problem solving.

- Tutors plan lessons carefully to help learners work on their own and to improve their study skills, for example through building portfolios to record new learning. Tutors model good practice in working with children and support learners sensitively to improve their skills of working constructively with their children. They make good use of practical and relevant resources. However, in the majority of centres, tutors have limited access to information and learning technology to enhance learning activities.

- Initial assessment is well planned and utilised to identify learners' starting points and existing skills, as many have not participated in a learning programme since they left school. Learners are involved well in negotiating activities and planning learning that extend their skills. In one class, a support assistant worked closely with a pre-foundation learner to support the development of her basic mathematics skills so that she could better help her child with school work.

- Learners engage well in group discussions and benefit from positive verbal feedback that encourages them and extends their learning. They receive carefully considered feedback on written work and in weekly record sheets that enable them to recognise what they need to do to improve. This feedback is a useful written dialogue between tutor and learner.

- Learners make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. A significant minority are working towards external qualifications to meet the requirements of their future training and employment goals. Tutors plan lesson content well to provide relevant, activities that develop skills for work, which draw upon learners' experience and background.

- Information, advice and guidance on next steps for learners are built successfully into courses. On longer courses, learners benefit from advice provided by the local further education college careers specialist. Learners benefit from individual advice sessions. They record their informal discussions with tutors on individual learning plans that include identified steps to achieve long term goals.

- Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily through the range of courses on offer which meet the diverse needs of targeted groups well. Course materials often support a wider awareness of equalities using role models such as a noted female bridge builder, to challenge gender stereotyping. However, tutors do not always pay enough attention to classroom management to ensure that all learners are fully included and that they learn to value difference and diversity.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good

- Leadership and management are good. Leaders create an ethos in which all staff, managers and governors are enabled to reflect on how best to achieve their aims by identifying what they need in order to improve. The strategic objectives, negotiated with all users and strongly influenced and supported by governors, focus on improving provision for learners through a range of clear objectives for the curriculum, marketing, finance, quality and resources.

- Managers set clear and demanding targets that are monitored regularly and met. An ambitious governing body knows the college well and has extensive links with the local community that it uses to promote the college and to inform it of local needs. Very good communications at all levels ensure that staff have high expectations of themselves and their learners.

- Strong performance management results in significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Following particularly robust arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning the college has identified accurately that the majority of lessons are good and that a small minority require improvement.

- Action plans from lesson observations are checked regularly to ensure that improvements take place before the next observation. A detailed analysis of strengths and required improvements is well embedded and leads to staff training designed carefully to meet identified needs. This is often delivered by staff who exhibit good practice in those areas. Key development needs are met in whole college conference days, while individual needs are met successfully by managers, mentors, peers or coaches.

- Quality improvement measures, including self-assessment, have many outstanding features. The self-assessment process is highly inclusive of the views of tutors, learners, partners and other users. It is accurate, and judgements match those of inspectors.

- Robust quality reviews between managers and senior leaders take place every six weeks. These monitor carefully a range of performance indicators, including attendance, retention, and observation grades, all of which show significant improvements over three years. These data are then used by curriculum managers to write their self-assessments that are based firmly on accurate evidence.

- Outcomes of observations and self-assessment are monitored robustly, both internally and by external partners, including a peer review group. Governors ask challenging questions to monitor the quality and accuracy of these assessments.

- In order to ensure improvements are sustainable, all policies and quality documents are co-located to give staff easy access to up-to-date documents. Recent changes ensure that all databases are brought together to avoid duplication, and improve the collation of data for analysis. Work shadowing arrangements result in staff having a good understanding of each other's roles and why information needs to be processed efficiently and promptly.

- Planning and management of the curriculum is good. Effective partnership with a local further education college creates useful progression routes to higher level courses, and good advice and guidance on progression opportunities.

- A particularly productive partnership with JCP shows the college to be very flexible and responsive to their requests to provide high quality, bespoke training to meet the needs of unemployed people and local employers. This training results in high levels of sustainable employment for local people. However, the college is aware that it needs to develop more links with local businesses to extend progression routes into employment for their learners.

- Managers tailor provision for the areas of greatest need where they design specific courses in response to community requests for help. For example, it has devised programmes to engage fathers, and programmes to re-engage boys who are reluctant learners through a science programme. The college's 'learning bus' is used well to engage new learners, provide an on-site assessment centre for the JCP project and sessions on internet safety to schools.

- Equality, diversity and inclusion are promoted well, both in lessons and through themed weeks celebrating different cultures. Recruitment of volunteers from the same ethnic group helps new learners to be comfortable in the initial stages of their courses.

- Data are accurate, used well, and analysed regularly to identify differences in outcomes for different groups. Impact measures are monitored effectively at all quality reviews. In 2011/12 observation of lessons focused on how well equality was embedded in teaching and learning, and the outcomes of this resulted in useful training and sharing of good practice at the annual staff conference.

- The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners, and takes appropriate measures to manage risk.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Thurrock Adult Community College									
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 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
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
ICT for users	**2**
Foundation English and mathematics	**2**
ESOL	**2**
Family Learning	**2**

Provider details

Thurrock Adult Community College	
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 0
	Part-time: 2,074
Principal/CEO	Sharon Walsh
Date of previous inspection	May 2009
Website address	www.thurrock.gov.uk/adult college

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	33	918	4	111	0	0	0	0

Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	**Intermediate**		**Advanced**		**Higher**	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	0	0	0	0	0	0

Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A
Number of community learners	1,933
Number of employability learners	1,075
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A

Additional socio-economic information

Thurrock Borough Council is a unitary authority situated between London and Essex. Thurrock Adult Community College is the adult learning service for the authority.The population has grown in recent years and is now about 157,000 and is characterized by a relatively younger population than that nationally. The proportion of people from a minority ethnic group is lower though recent migration from Eastern Europe has contributed to greater diversity. Some 44% of boys and 55% of girls achieve five or more A*-C grades at GCSE level, which is slightly below national rates. At 16, almost all school leavers continue in education or employment with training. The unemployment rate among those aged 16-24 is higher, but overall unemployment is lower than that nationally.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Jai Sharda HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the vice principal 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; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions and assessments. 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

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Learner View is a new website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk or if you have any questions about Learner View please email Ofsted at:

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and provider inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk