

# Tower Hamlets Idea Store Learning

## Local authority

<b>Inspection dates</b>		25 February–1 March 2013
<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		Good-2

## Summary of key findings for learners

### This provider is good because:

- Outcomes for learners, teaching, learning and assessment and the effectiveness of leadership and management are all good.
- Learners achieve well; the majority of learners develop good employability and life skills and make good progress.
- Leaders and managers have made significant and telling improvements since the last inspection.
- Idea Store Learning effectively attracts a great number of disadvantaged and low-skilled learners from a wide variety of backgrounds into learning and helps them to gain the confidence and skills to improve their lives.
- Its programmes are responsive and well designed; they are built around effective partnerships and the community, meeting the needs and raising the aspirations of the local people well.
- Idea Store Learning centres are harmonious, safe, vibrant and well resourced; learners respect each other and make good use of the opportunities and facilities they provide.

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

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good but do not consistently meet the full range of learners' needs.
- Tutors do not explain clearly enough to learners what they need to do to improve.
- Learners' attendance and punctuality are not good enough.
- Self-assessment reports at curriculum level are not sufficiently analytical and evaluative; they do not focus enough on learning and assessment.
- Tutors do not use the richness of the cultural diversity and experiences of local people enough in bringing lessons to life.

## Full report

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

- Ensure tutors routinely:
  - plan in detail how they can manage classroom activities more effectively so that they are more lively and involve learners more actively
  - use assessment information on individuals through which they can stretch and challenge all learners
  - use a more varied range of strategies to check and reinforce learning
  - give all learners more individual coaching and feedback in lessons
  - receive good training to improve their confidence, awareness and expertise so that they fully integrate appreciation of diversity into lessons more effectively.
- Set and enforce high expectations on punctuality and attendance so that absences and late arrivals in class are rare.
- Ensure that self-assessment reports give clear and detailed evaluations of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- In 2011/12, the majority of learners starting a programme in community learning achieved their main learning goal. Success rates for those learners on courses leading to external qualifications were considerably higher than the national average and greatly improved from the previous year. Success rates for the small number of apprentices were satisfactory.
- There are no significant gaps in achievement between different groups of learners. Learners receiving additional learning support achieve well and success rates for learners from different groups and disabled learners are similar to the average for the service.
- Many learners who commence learning with the service have no formal qualifications or possess low level qualifications. These learners make good progress and many, on completing their courses, move to further learning or employment.
- Successful involvement in learning leads many learners to play a more active part in their communities. Elderly people, young parents, long-term unemployed and those from minority ethnic groups are attracted by the inclusive nature and locations of the Idea Store Learning centres in the community.
- Many local people, through successfully completing practical short courses, gain paid and voluntary work as steps to improving their personal situations, as in the case of learners studying courses such as community interpreting, photojournalism or massage and aromatherapy.
- Learners develop greater confidence and self-esteem, improve their social skills and appreciate more fully the personal and economic benefits that engagement in learning brings to their everyday lives. This is particularly the case in practical courses such as tailoring.
- Many well-considered enrichment activities enhance learners' experiences and learning, for example English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners have good volunteering opportunities through which they gain valuable work experience and employability skills.
- The service reports high attendance rates, but during the inspection week a significant number of classes were poorly attended. Tutors did not challenge poor punctuality effectively and in some cases learners arriving late disrupted learning. Tutors do not always reinforce the

importance of punctuality and high attendance for good progress and development of good working practices.

- Since the last inspection the service has put in place appropriate progression routes to further learning and training and learners now move into courses that were not previously available. This is the result of the service working judiciously with other organisations to offer enhanced progression opportunities, such as a local college for ESOL and foundation courses, a university for an innovative dance degree course and a range of third sector providers.

<b>The quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	Good
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- Enthusiastic, well-qualified tutors have high expectations of learners and demonstrate good subject knowledge that helps them to make good progress. The learners respond well to the insightful direction and interest of tutors about how to improve their skills. For example, this was apparent in highly productive sessions on confidence building and interview skills.
- The best teaching ensures that learners rapidly acquire new knowledge and skills and are able to apply these to their daily work and home lives. Learners greatly enjoy their courses and enrich their lives by involvement in new experiences such as dance, fitness and creative courses. Their often newly-acquired confidence leads them to make new friends, communicate more effectively with each other and seek to take part in further learning courses.
- In the most effective lessons, learners take part positively in interesting, challenging activities such as role playing interviews, small group discussions on topical issues and practising new technical skills such as effective methods to photograph clear glass objects.
- In less successful lessons, however, tutors do not pay enough attention to the individual starting points and previous experiences of their learners. They plan whole group activities to meet general course objectives but do not provide sufficient active learning activities that involve all learners and ensure all are stretched and challenged at appropriate levels.
- In the well-planned sessions tutors include relevant and engaging topics for class presentations. ESOL learners develop good language knowledge through finding out about activities and services on offer in the local community. In dance classes, learners improve their mobility, balance and memory skills through stimulating choreography and thoroughly enjoy the challenge of their classes. Tutors pay good attention to health and safety on practical courses such as fitness and dance.
- Some lessons, in which tutors talk too long to the whole group, are less effective; they rely too much on using general questions which elicit responses from only the more confident learners and do not involve all learners well enough.
- Feedback to learners is reassuring and encouraging but is not detailed enough. Tutors give sound and informative feedback to the whole group about completion of general learning objectives, but do not give enough information to individual learners as to what they need to do to improve their individual skills or specific techniques.
- Initial assessment of learners' starting points and the exploration of their previous learning experiences are good. The process to identify learners with additional support needs at enrolment is robust and results in good support provided promptly that enables learners at the many centres to participate and make good progress. However, in some courses which do not lead to formal qualifications, initial assessment is less effective and targets for improving the skills of learners are too general.
- Specialist resources and accommodation are good, although not all learners have sufficient access to information and learning technology (ILT). Tutors in accounting, however, have successfully developed the virtual learning environment for their courses, giving learners greater access and independence to further their studies. Not all tutors are confident enough to use the range of ILT tools imaginatively to enhance learning and develop learners' independent use of information technology skills.

- The development of learners' English and mathematics skills is a positive aspect of teaching. This is integrated thoughtfully and developed in many sessions even though tutors do not always check the levels of learners' skills adequately enough during initial assessment. Learners therefore do not make as good progress as they might, including in leisure and fitness courses.
- Information, advice and guidance are sound and impartial; they are effective in helping learners to plan for their future development and progression.
- In lessons, the commitment of the service to equality and diversity is apparent in the harmonious, respectful and inclusive atmosphere. In ESOL classes tutors foster appreciation of equality and diversity well in learning. However, in other curriculum areas, tutors do not systematically incorporate these values into the learning programmes to ensure that learners fully understand their impact on their learning and lives.
- Many tutors lack confidence and expertise in using the diverse nature of learners' backgrounds to fully celebrate the richness of their learning environment or in using this resource to inform and extend the content of the courses.

## Sport, fitness and health

### Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- Good teaching, learning and assessment have led to good outcomes for learners. They make sound progress relative to their ability level at the start of their courses and achieve good standards; they demonstrate safe working practices in practical sessions. They work cooperatively with each other and develop good knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Tutors are very enthusiastic and learners benefit from the high expectations, motivation and care that they provide. Learners enjoy the learning environment; they are both relaxed and stimulated and appreciate the high levels of expertise and encouragement, as exemplified in exercise to music classes.
- Tutors are very experienced and all fitness coaches hold relevant coaching awards or are working towards gaining them. They give informed, appropriate guidance and support that help learners achieve their learning goals.
- Tutors constantly emphasise healthy and safe practices in practical situations, such as the importance of warm-up and warm-down activities. This vigilance is reinforced throughout the programmes where all safety aspects are stringently met and consequently learners have a good understanding of health, safety and welfare. For example, their awareness is raised by completing health questionnaires that check if they are physically capable of completing practical courses.
- Induction is thorough and particularly so on courses leading to recognised qualifications where relevant tests of prior knowledge check the suitability of learners for enrolment on anatomy and physiology and massage courses.
- Appropriate assessments are carried out when learners start their course and the results lead to prompt additional learning support for those learners who need it. All learners routinely complete individual learning plans at the start of their courses which lead to effective progress reviews in which tutors carefully monitor their progress. Learners understand how to improve as a result of these reviews.
- Sessions are planned well and involve all learners, for example in dynamic aerobic classes. Practical sessions effectively develop the skills of learners in putting theory into practice and provide opportunities for them to learn coaching techniques. Tutors present learning support materials skilfully, with good use of PowerPoint presentations, pictures and diagrams.
- Tutors do not sufficiently consider learners' English and mathematics needs when planning sessions, although they explain clearly the different terms used; for example in yoga lessons and

references to anatomical and physiological names in other fitness classes. However, there was little evidence during inspection that learners' practical numeracy skills were being adequately developed.

- Tutors provide good information, advice and guidance. Since the last inspection, clear progression routes have been introduced to help learners plan their next steps from introductory learning to higher level and accredited programmes or to employment. Learners are very positive about how tutors frequently guide them to identify and work towards achieving personal aspirations, whether for further learning or employment.
- Displays in the centres and classrooms showing clear commitment to, and celebration of, equality and diversity are commonplace and highly visible, but tutors do not promote fully the key elements of equality and diversity in their teaching and take for granted learners' understanding in practical sessions.

## Visual and performing arts

### Learning programmes for 19+

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and are reflected in good outcomes. Learners develop good standards of work through practising correct techniques which they apply quickly to their work, for example in ceramics. Learners improve their social, economic and employment opportunities as a result of their learning. For example, courses such as dance and photography for those facing mental health issues help learners to improve self-esteem and rediscover their creativity. However, punctuality is poor and attendance is not good enough.
- Learners make good progress in sessions on creative and technical skills at a swift pace and display industrious and enthusiastic responses to tasks and activities. Learners develop proficiency in performance, visual arts and technical studies and approach sessions in dance, singing, painting and tailoring with confidence.
- Learners enjoy the practical elements of their work and quickly acquire new knowledge in a broad range of creative subjects; they learn skills that are sustained and benefit their lives, for example the ability to make clothing, take part in social dance, and sing with good technique. They produce good standards of original visual artworks and learn detailed technical crafts.
- Tutors set high expectations and support learners to realise original technical and creative projects through detailed instruction, clear demonstration of skills and the provision of specialist resources. However, some learners do not receive enough suitable individual assessment and tutors' feedback is too generalised and addressed to the learners as a group rather than individually.
- Staff plan well and teach sessions with great enthusiasm, resulting in the learners experiencing good active learning and participating well. Learners support and motivate each other well. Open workshop sessions develop their enterprise and independent learning effectively and help them prepare for employment. They benefit from the technical knowledge of experienced tutors who reflect current creative industry practice.
- Learners make sound progress in sessions and realise how they are developing good skills as shown in a painting and drawing session where learners reflected and identified their aspirations early in their programme. However, their starting points are not assessed or recorded accurately enough. For some learners this means that their learning and support needs are not always met appropriately, although they have effective short term goals that are used to plan individual projects and tasks.
- Learners work diligently towards exhibition and performance goals, such as public music and dance performances. They enjoy individual experimentation and lines of enquiry in their creative

and technical work, although they do not take part enough in assessing themselves and each other.

- The teaching of practical English and mathematics is satisfactory, but tutors do not develop the specialist subject knowledge of learners fully enough in the context of the subjects. Resources for learners do not take account fully of useful aids to developing numeracy skills which can be usefully applied to technical arts subjects, for example exploring and defining quantities and measurements of materials.
- Learners and tutors do not use information and learning technologies consistently enough to enhance learning in sessions, such as to document work or record creative processes leading to final assessment. For example, in one subject, learners’ work on an accredited course is recorded with a digital camera but this is not done on a non-accredited course in the same subject.
- Learners’ achievements are widely celebrated in performances, exhibitions, local reviews and publications, and learners’ work features prominently across the provider venues. One particular photographic exhibition challenged everyday attitudes to disability and age in displaying self-portraits of older learners and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Learning partnerships provide good enrichment and progression opportunities, for example with community action groups, mental health organisations, further and higher education institutions, and schools.
- Accommodation is good across sites, with spacious and well-lit learning environments with, for example, specialist dance floors, good sound systems and technical equipment. Tutors manage sessions effectively to make best use of space. Learners and staff work safely in the workshops and specialist areas.
- Teaching and learning activities promote inclusion and encourage respect for others whose skills are less developed, for example circle-based warm-ups, group singing, pair work and rotation of dance partners. Individual needs are appropriately considered, for example tutors take good account of mobility limitations in movement sessions to allow full participation of all learners.
- The effective promotion of equality and appreciation of diversity are not yet fully integrated into the arts curriculum; the content of materials and lesson plans does not sufficiently foster a broader cultural repertoire reflective of the local area or explore the richness of the learners’ diverse backgrounds.

<b>English for speakers of other languages</b>	
<b>Learning programmes for 19+</b>	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Outcomes are good and learners progress well in their lessons. Those studying at pre-entry levels improve their literacy skills quickly, ordering words correctly and constructing basic sentences accurately. Learners studying at entry levels speedily improve their command of more complex sentences and develop their vocabulary well. They gain confidence in reading and writing at higher levels, consolidating and improving their listening skills. Learners attend punctually and regularly.
- Tutors have high expectations for their learners, work well with them and motivate them. Learners take pride in learning and work together keenly and share their knowledge generously. Relationships within groups are excellent and new learners settle very quickly. The tutors ensure that all learners are suitably involved in lessons and keep up with the challenging pace and tasks.
- Learning activities are well designed to get the best from learners. Learners benefit from much pair and small-group work to practise speaking and listening skills. In highly effective lessons,



learners have fun moving quickly around the group, asking and responding to targeted questions or reconstituting the order of the story they have just read.

- In less effective lessons learners do not rehearse, repeat and practise intonation patterns and stress on words enough. Tutors do not systematically practise these skills with their learners in whole group settings even when activities lend themselves to it. This results in learners not practising these skills sufficiently so that their pronunciation is not accurate enough and therefore, at times, hinders effective communication.
- The assessment of learners’ needs at the start of their programmes and monitoring of their progress are good. Tutors attentively review the results of assessments with them to ensure their goals are appropriate and sufficiently challenging. Learners also benefit from a thorough induction of what tutors expect of them and this also helps them to have a clear understanding of attendance, and health and safety requirements.
- Tutors give timely and accurate verbal feedback during lessons. They regularly monitor progress and encourage learners well to correct errors and check their own work. This enables learners to make good progress in lessons and develop effective English language skills. However, written reviews of their progress are not thorough and do not give enough details to help them to improve as speedily as they might.
- ESOL learners receive timely and effective support. Additional learning needs are identified early and help given so that those with individual needs, such as for dyslexia or additional literacy needs, complete courses successfully.
- The use of, and access to, information and learning technology in ESOL to improve learning is not sufficiently developed. Tutors do not fully exploit the use of up-to-date technology or ensure that learners know about on-line resources to enhance their learning.
- Good information, advice and guidance help learners to find out about appropriate services or further learning and training. Learners receive helpful advice for progression and are made aware of other courses in the local further education colleges, such as higher level ESOL, health and social care, English, mathematics and information technology, or parenting courses in local schools.
- Tutors promote equality and diversity well through their teaching. Learners develop a sound understanding of cultural differences and a good appreciation of different ways of being and thinking. Learners value working alongside others from different cultures and faiths and are keen to improve their knowledge and understanding of the English language and of other cultures. Tutors’ effective use of a range of teaching strategies enables tutors to meet the different learning needs and abilities of their learners well.

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management</b>	Good
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- The service is highly ambitious and aspirational. It has successfully developed and sustained a coherent vision that enables it to foster learning for an ethnically and linguistically diverse community in an area of high deprivation. Its unique and innovative concept – the Idea Store Learning – effectively combines adult learning and library services to support a wide spectrum of formal, informal and independent learning.
- Strategic leadership is good. Senior council staff understand the service well and provide appropriate scrutiny and challenge. A significant restructuring of the service two years ago accelerated improvement in its performance. Substantial additional funding provided by the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, to enable the service and its partners to increase the reach and availability of ESOL provision across the borough, clearly exemplifies its importance in securing the council’s strategic priorities.
- The service’s well established performance review processes contribute effectively to improving teaching, learning and assessment. The targets that managers set and review regularly with tutors closely align to the service’s quality improvement plans. Procedures to eliminate poor teaching are effective.

- Observation of teaching and learning is regular and effective, and carried out by a well-trained team of service staff. Observations result in clear, helpful evaluative oral and written feedback. Observers routinely agree detailed and appropriate actions for improvement with tutors following observations, ensuring their implementation is carefully monitored. Professional development of staff effectively enhances their teaching.
- Leaders and managers have a strong understanding of the service's strengths and weaknesses, which self-assessment reporting does not fully reflect. The summary report helpfully explains the context of the programmes provided and gives a succinct and comprehensive account of its strengths, but does not clearly identify areas for improvement, particularly in teaching. Curriculum area reports are detailed but not sufficiently evaluative or self-critical.
- Quality assurance and improvement arrangements are good. Auditing of processes and documentation is routine and effective. Leaders and managers monitor progress well; they implement actions identified in the service's detailed and appropriate quality improvement plans. An effective meetings structure secures tutors' involvement, understanding and commitment to the improvement process.
- The service makes good use of the views of its users. Feedback in service-wide questionnaires is generally very positive; managers quickly investigate and remedy any highlighted shortfalls resulting from satisfaction surveys. For example, this recently led to improvements in the availability and content of course information leaflets.
- Accommodation for learning is good, particularly in the four Idea Store Learning centres which are highly popular, attractive and welcoming settings. Together with an extensive and diverse range of other premises across the borough, they ensure learning is easily accessible to local communities. Resources to support learning are generally good, but some computer hardware and software that learners use are not up to date.
- Curriculum planning is good and reflects local authority priorities well. The service makes routine and effective use of council data to identify groups not currently participating in learning, and to inform research into how best to secure their engagement. Despite well planned ESOL provision, the service does not have a sufficiently systematic approach to meeting learners' English and mathematics needs across other areas of the curriculum.
- The service works highly effectively and flexibly with a large and growing range of partners to extend and improve its reach. Strong partnerships with local schools, third sector organisations and council-funded services, such as children's centres, are very successful in engaging new learners with little or no previous formal education. Offering learning in partners' premises is effective in fostering participation by specific groups who face cultural or religious barriers to attending classes at mainstream venues.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The service is highly inclusive. It very effectively promotes learners' understanding of harassment and discrimination, and creates an ethos in which these behaviours are rare.
- Leaders and managers effectively monitor the impact of their promotion of equalities. Sustained action has ensured there are no significant gaps in achievement between different groups of learners. However, reporting on the achievement of different groups is not sufficiently comprehensive and monitoring of this data by curriculum teams is poorly developed.
- Sound risk assessment of premises and activities ensures the health and safety of learners. Safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements and are thorough and well considered.



## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Tower Hamlets Idea Store Learning

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Sport, leisure and recreation</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Performing arts</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Visual arts</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ESOL</b>	<b>2</b>

## Provider details

Tower Hamlets Idea Store Learning	
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: Nil
	Part-time: 9,369
Principal/CEO	Ms Judith St John
Date of previous inspection	March 2009
Website address	www.towerhamlets.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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Part-time	-	52	-	101	-	68	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	-	38	-	-	-	-		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	8669							
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"> <li>■ Bromley by Bow Centre St Leonards Street London E3 3BT</li> </ul>							

## Additional socio-economic information

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is the third most deprived authority in England, with just over a third of working age people economically inactive, which is significantly above the London and national average. The borough's single largest ethnic group is Bangladeshi who represents just under a third of the local population and who makes up a large proportion of learners. Of the borough's residents, 20% have no qualification, which is higher than the London average. The proportion of residents in Tower Hamlets with level 1 and level 2 qualifications is lower than in London and England as a whole. The Tower Hamlets Idea Store Learning centres provide adult and community learning and apprenticeships for young people.

## Information about this inspection

**Lead inspector**

Peter Green HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the Deputy Head Lifelong Learning Idea Store 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, 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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