# Portsmouth Community Learning Service

## Local authority

| Inspection dates | | 5–7 November 2013 |
|---|---|---|
| **Overall effectiveness** | **This inspection:** | **Good-2** |
| | Previous inspection: | Outstanding-1 |
| Outcomes for learners | | Outstanding-1 |
| 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 vast majority of learners gain excellent employability skills, self-confidence, make good progress and gain their qualifications.

- Good teaching of mathematics results in learners gaining good practical skills which they apply in everyday life.

- Excellent use of information and learning technology enables learners to enjoy their learning, become more independent and achieve success.

- The service is very responsive to local need. It has made effective partnerships and meets the needs of the community very well. It brings many local people into learning and helps them to improve their opportunities to develop themselves.

- Tutors and managers raise the aspirations of learners, leading to them continuing in learning and gaining good qualifications.

- The Community Learning Service provides a harmonious and well-resourced environment where people respect each other, make good use of the opportunities provided and improve their skills.

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

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, but tutors do not always involve learners actively enough in lessons and check that learning goals have been met.

- The service does not yet ensure all learners receive suitable information and guidance about their next steps, although learners' progression to further learning is good.

# Full report

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

- Ensure that tutors routinely plan and manage classroom activities more effectively so that they:
  - involve learners in taking a more active part in their learning
  - reinforce learning and consolidate skills through more skilful and thoughtful use of questions
  - make learning objectives sufficiently stretching for more capable learners and check that learning objectives have been met.
- Ensure all learners receive appropriate information and guidance to help them decide their next steps.
- Provide effective continuous professional development for tutors and observers in order to ensure tutors work to the highest standards and best professional practices.

## Inspection judgements

| Outcomes for learners | Outstanding |
|---|---|

- The vast majority of learners gain their qualifications and progress to further learning or training. A large proportion of those who possess basic or no formal qualifications successfully take their first steps towards improving their skills and employment chances. The excellent help from the service and the positive experiences of learning result in learners gaining greater confidence and the desire to improve their qualifications. For example, a group of learners are training to become teaching and learning support assistants as a result of gaining their functional skills English qualification.

- The pass rates of learners taking mathematics functional skills are very high. They enjoy their lessons in which the tutors make the subject come alive by using relevant, everyday examples that help the learners to understand concepts and ideas. The learners also enjoy English for the relevance of the content, such as writing a critique of a 'blog'. The managers and tutors took prompt, positive and effective actions to improve functional skills English results last year when they dropped below the high rate of previous years. The extra support and use of workbooks to help out-of-class learning is having a very positive impact on the progress of current learners. Attendance rates of learners are high.

- The programmes in the community are highly successful. The tutors develop very effectively the confidence, self-esteem and communication skills of their learners – a very large proportion of whom have not gained high level qualifications previously. The service has also enabled volunteers to successfully gain suitable skills, particularly when they seek employment or training opportunities. For example, the service's ongoing support of a local drama group of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has greatly developed the self-assurance and skills of the volunteers as well as the learners.

- Learners make exceptional progress, take pride in their work and attend regularly. They are punctual, use their time effectively in lessons and develop a wide range of practical skills in information and communication technology (ICT), modern foreign languages, English and mathematics. In classes such as craft, cookery and guitar the standard of learners' work is high.

- Learners arrive well prepared and enthusiastic to learn and develop new skills that improve their capability to gain employment, progress in their jobs and help their children with their school work. Learners attending a family learning course pointed out the value they gained from being able to understand and help their children with their mathematics homework – something they had previously struggled to do. The service's regular participation in community projects, for example celebrating the bi-centenary of Charles Dickens, has led to the engagement of new learners and their families in improving their qualifications and skills.

- The service has helped very many learners to gain employment and take up volunteering opportunities by developing their self-belief and improving their confidence, communication and social skills. For example, several learners, after successfully completing an excellent confidence-building and skills programme, are now volunteering on community projects and have jobs with prospects and training in local businesses.

- The numbers of learners who progress into further education or training are high. The service has clear progression pathways. Learners benefit greatly when they progress onto the next level of learning due to the excellent relationships the service has with other local providers of education and training such as a local college. Tutors have very effectively collected accurate information on destinations of learners that highlight how much they benefit from their learning with the service.

- The service's analysis of information on its learners is very thorough and detailed, and leads to prompt and suitable actions where issues are identified. The review of performance of learners shows that they make good progress, many from low starting points. There is little or no variation in the performance of learners from different groups

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

- Good teaching, learning and assessment on community learning programmes have contributed greatly to the outstanding outcomes for learners. As a result, learners gain confidence and skills that they use in their everyday lives. They work well together, learn from each other and consequently make very good progress.

- Tutors expertly build everyday practical English and mathematics skills into lessons, enabling learners to practise these in the context of what they are learning. For example, in cookery classes, tutors ensure that learners know how to convert and calculate different measures, and set out and write recipes in clear English confidently.

- The enthusiasm and commitment of tutors have a positive effect on learners, especially those learning new skills or who lack confidence. The careful attention and encouragement they give to learners help them to develop their skills and understanding at a good pace. They adapt topics thoughtfully to meet learners' needs and interests, and they in turn contribute ideas that make sessions enjoyable and from which they improve their learning and knowledge. For example, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners enjoy and gain confidence from making presentations to their peers.

- In the most effective sessions, tutors plan their lessons carefully on the basis of their knowledge of learners' needs and differing abilities. They ensure the pace of learning is suitable and that all learners leave having gained good skills development and knowledge from their sessions. In an English language class, learners gained additional and useful knowledge and tips for job interviews explained in a lively and informative video. However, they do not always give capable learners enough to do to extend their learning.

- Progress is less effective in a very few lessons. In these, the learners are not given sufficient time and opportunities to practise and consolidate skills and knowledge because explanations and instructions take too long. Less experienced tutors do not ask questions that are sufficiently precise; they do not target learners to answer and do not give them sufficient time to reflect.

- In the great majority of lessons, tutors make full and effective use of information and learning technology that enhances learning well. For example, learners improve by using digital cameras to record progress and are directed to very useful websites that encourage creativity and independent learning. Through skilful use of electronic boards, tutors initiate good discussions and motivate learners. In a functional skills mathematics lesson, learners used the electronic board well to extract and interpret data and reinforce their learning by discussing the findings.

- Tutors use technology thoughtfully to develop learning in different ways. For example, in an independent living skills lesson, learners used a well-chosen interactive game that developed their confidence through physical exercise. In a craft session, learners were inspired and created

their Christmas decorations from eye-catching and unusual designs they had researched on the internet.

- Assessment is good. At the start of courses, tutors identify learners' starting points clearly and agree suitably challenging goals with them to help them improve and gain the knowledge and skills for which they enrol. Tutors check and record learners' progress well in the majority of sessions using, for example, photographs and video evidence to record achievement. However, they do not always formally check whether lesson objectives are met at the end of sessions, losing the opportunity to consolidate learning more securely.

- Feedback to learners is helpful and encouraging and helps them to understand what they need to do to improve their practical skills. Tutors ensure they develop good note-taking skills, check spelling before sending emails and mentally practise calculating costs of ingredients for recipes. Learners also develop sound English, mathematics and ICT skills on community learning courses.

- The service provides suitable and timely course information and support that result in learners settling quickly into their courses and making very good progress. However, it does not yet provide sufficiently informative guidance and careers advice.

- Tutors develop learners' understanding of equality and appreciation of diversity well in lessons. This is often done sensitively in the context of what is being taught and takes good account of the different experiences of learners, even though this is not identified in their planning. Tutors provide a safe environment for learners; they develop a positive ethos in which learners enjoy learning from each other across cultures, ages and gender.

| The effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
|---|---|

- The restructured service has set very high ambitions and aspirations for its learners and the local community. It has a coherent and clear vision and develops relevant learning in the community where there are areas of deprivation. It provides excellent and responsive services to support a wide range of formal, informal and independent learning that results in many learners taking up learning opportunities that benefit them in the short and longer term.

- Senior managers provide regular and supportive scrutiny and challenge to the service. They have a good understanding of the strengths and challenges that face the re-launched service. Tutors and support staff have responded very positively to a significant restructuring of the service and their continued commitment to learners has resulted in the service maintaining high standards and its outstanding outcomes for learners.

- Regular and helpful observation of teaching and learning leads to better teaching and assessment. It is undertaken methodically by a small, well-trained team and contributes effectively to tutors improving their teaching and assessment practices through observations which have clear and helpful oral and written feedback. Observers routinely agree detailed and appropriate actions for improvement with tutors following observations, and ensure these are carried out.

- Professional development for tutors has improved their teaching. The service is maintaining its strong commitment to continuous professional development after the restructure. Tutors increase their own learning and development by sharing good practices and resources informally and regularly with each other.

- The managers have a strong and clear understanding of the service's strengths and weaknesses, as demonstrated in the self-assessment report. The report accurately identifies its strengths and where it can improve. It uses data well and its evaluation provides a strong basis for managers to bring about further improvements. The self-assessment process takes good account of learners' views about the quality of their teaching, and managers and tutors use this information well to improve assessment practices.

- The self-assessment process leads clearly to improvements being made to the provision. Managers closely monitor the service's detailed and appropriate quality improvement plan. They

secure tutors' understanding and commitment to improvement by involving them in carrying out actions in the plan.

▪ The service makes good use of the views of its users. Feedback from learners is very positive, particularly about the quality of teaching. Managers quickly investigate concerns and remedy issues that the surveys highlight. For example, times of information technology classes were recently changed so that learners could use their bus passes and avoid being late for classes.

▪ Accommodation for learning is good, particularly in The Learning Place which provides an attractive and welcoming setting, helping learners feel comfortable and learn well. By using other partners across the city, the service ensures learning is easily accessible to local communities. Resources to support learning are good and the virtual learning environment is well used by learners off-site who augment their classroom-based activities effectively.

▪ Curriculum planning is good and reflects local priorities well, in line with national guidelines and principles. For example, the service focuses on issues important to the community, such as improving the literacy and numeracy skills of local people and their employability. It carefully identifies and involves groups not currently participating in learning and the community through local charities and volunteer help. For example, ESOL courses are well planned and responsive to local needs; they provide many learners with good communication skills, give them confidence and help them into employment or next steps in learning.

▪ The service works highly effectively and flexibly with a growing range of partners that extend learning in the community. Through strong partnerships with voluntary organisations, other county council services, such as children's centres, and schools, the service very successfully engages new learners with few formal educational qualifications. Providing learning away from The Learning Place has secured good participation by specific groups who find it difficult to attend classes. The service has provided excellent support in the community to learners with mental health difficulties, enabling them to rebuild their confidence and improve their employment prospects.

▪ Staff and tutors develop appreciation of different cultures and backgrounds well among learners. The surroundings and the atmosphere in The Learning Place are welcoming to all and help learners settle in quickly, feel comfortable with each other and learn well. The service respects all its learners and its expectations of no harassment and unfair discrimination ensure an ethos in which these behaviours are not tolerated and very rare.

▪ Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and meet statutory government requirements. Risk assessment of premises and activities is good and ensures the health and safety of learners.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Portsmouth Community Learning Service

| Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:<br><br>1: Outstanding<br>2: Good<br>3: Requires improvement<br>4: Inadequate | Overall | 19+ Learning programmes | Community learning |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Overall effectiveness** | **2** | 2 | 2 |
| Outcomes for learners | **1** | 1 | 1 |
| 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 |
|---|---|
| **Community learning** | **2** |

# Provider details

| 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: 2844 |
| Principal/CEO | Mr Andrew Bishop |
| Date of previous inspection | March 2009 |
| Website address | www.learnportsmouth.ac.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** | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Part-time** | - | 654 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Number of traineeships** | 16-19 | | 19+ | | Total | | | |
| | N/A | | N/A | | N/A | | | |
| **Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age** | **Intermediate** | | **Advanced** | | **Higher** | | | |
| | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | | |
| | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| **Number of learners aged 14-16** | N/A | | | | | | | |
| **Full-time** | N/A | | | | | | | |
| **Part-time** | 654 | | | | | | | |
| **Number of community learners** | 498 | | | | | | | |
| **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:** | ▪ Highbury College Tudor Crescent Portsmouth Hampshire PO6 2SA | | | | | | | |

## Contextual information

Portsmouth City Council's Community Learning Service (CLS) is part of the Employment, Learning and Skills service grouping within Corporate Assets, Business and Standards. The service operates from a community base in the city, The Learning Place, North End. Adults in Portsmouth have lower levels of skills and qualifications than the national average, with approximately 27% of the working age population having no national vocational qualification at level 1 or equivalent qualification.

The service aims to provide high quality learning experiences for all residents of Portsmouth, which meet local need. Its programmes focus on widening participation, developing communities, improving skills and supporting personal progression. It works to the principles of Community Led Planning, is a resource for the community and has three core themes: Learning for Life; Learning for Work; Learning for Pleasure.

## Information about this inspection

| Lead inspector | Peter Green HMI |
| --- | --- |

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Service 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; 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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