

# Plymouth Adult and Community Learning Service

## Local authority

<b>Inspection dates</b>		12–15 November 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 are good, with a very large majority of learners achieving the main aims of their course, and success rates for qualifications which are above the national average.
- Learners enjoy their learning and are enthusiastic; they gain in confidence and develop skills which enable them to progress into employment and further education.
- Most teaching and learning practice is good or better, with a good variety of well-paced learning activities.
- Tutors set targets based on high expectations, which motivate and encourage learners.
- Tutors provide good care and support, especially to those learners lacking in confidence.
- Strong leadership and management improve the breadth and quality of provision.
- Robust management of the service's performance ensures that provision is of consistently good quality.
- Highly effective management of subcontractors and partnerships increases participation by learners from under-represented groups.

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

- A minority of lessons require improvement.
- Staff do not carry out sufficient monitoring and recording of progress against measurable targets in individual learning plans.
- Written feedback to learners is not sufficiently regular and systematic to support improvement.
- Teachers do not promote equality and diversity sufficiently in teaching and learning.
- Attendance is low.

## Full report

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

- Increase the amount of teaching which is outstanding, and ensure that no teaching is less than good, by making greater use of information and learning technology in teaching sessions; ensuring that better use is made of questioning in teaching sessions to check learners' understanding; and making sure that teaching is carried out at an appropriate pace and does not introduce too much information at any one time.
- Ensure that written feedback to learners is provided systematically and regularly.
- Ensure that learners' progress is monitored and recorded against individual targets within their learning plans.
- Increase the promotion of equality and diversity in teaching sessions by identifying naturally occurring opportunities where learners' awareness of equality and diversity can be developed; and ensure that equality and diversity are included and planned in teaching sessions.
- Increase attendance by developing the newly introduced incentives system to encourage attendance; promoting the importance and value of regular attendance to learners at enrolment; and ensuring that learners appreciate the impact of their non-attendance on the class dynamics.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- Outcomes for learners are good. For those courses which lead to qualifications, success rates overall are above the national average, with most having improved over the last three years. Learning aims are typically appropriately challenging, and the achievement rate of these aims is high. Success rates on some courses have declined but are still within the national average.
- Learners enjoy their learning and are enthusiastic about it. They produce work of a high standard. They appreciate the skill and expertise of the tutors; they speak highly of the quality of the teaching and the dedication of the tutors. Punctuality is good; however, attendance levels are low. The service has encouraged good attendance recently through offering monetary incentives to good attenders.
- The service has recruited increasing numbers of learners from traditionally under-represented groups. The achievement rates for learners from different groups do not vary significantly. The service analyses performance data carefully to check that learners make good progress in relation to their starting points. Learners following courses provided by subcontractors perform equally well.
- Learners develop good personal and social skills. They gain confidence and feel more able to contribute to classes and participate in learning activities with their children. They take pride in their work and are keen to demonstrate their skills. Learners report that participating in the courses has led to making friends and extending their social lives.
- Learners develop good employability skills. The service offers all learners subsidised employability courses which include job-seeking skills and writing curriculum vitae. The development of English and mathematics is well integrated into many programmes. This integration is managed very discreetly in family learning, engaging learners' interest well. Learners' progression after the programme is good. Many learners participate in family learning sessions which introduce aspects of English and mathematics and then progress to further learning to enhance their skills. Success rates for those learners applying for jobs or for places in higher education are high.

## The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, with some examples of outstanding teaching, leading to good outcomes for learners. Tutors are committed and enthusiastic and have high expectations of learners, and this motivates and encourages learners to achieve.
- Tutors provide good care and support and are responsive to the needs of a wide range of learners. They encourage and guide learners to develop good, independent learning skills. For example, in language, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) sessions, tutors successfully promote the use of technology outside of the classroom by referring learners to useful on-line resources.
- The majority of lessons are good or better. Tutors use an interesting and wide variety of well-structured and well-paced learning activities, such as targeted questioning, quick drawing challenges in art, and games and puzzles in mathematics and languages.
- Tutors are skilled at designing lessons to meet the needs of learners. For example, in language and ESOL classes, tutors make good use of whole group teaching to improve pronunciation, and also employ carefully chosen pairings so that learners support and challenge each other. In family learning and English sessions, tutors successfully link learning points to learners' real-life situations.
- In the less effective sessions, theory teaching is too intense and learners are unable to sufficiently absorb and practise their learning. Tutors rely too much on general questions, which elicit responses from the more able learners only, and the pace of learning is too fast to meet the needs of all learners.
- Tutors make good use of accommodation across a wide range of learning and community venues. However, not all classes have access to information and learning technology and tutors make too little use of multi-media resources to add variety to teaching and enhance learning within the classroom.
- Tutors are well qualified and successfully use their good subject knowledge and expertise to motivate and maintain learners' interest during sessions. For example, in ESOL and English classes, tutors develop productive relationships with learners and are particularly sensitive to the needs of unconfident learners.
- Tutors pay good attention to health and safety in practical courses. Learners use safe working practices and safely use specialist equipment.
- Learners benefit from good initial assessment activity, which is used well to determine their starting points and goals. However, initial assessment does not routinely lead to effective target setting; too few tutors use the results of initial assessment to plan personal and measurable short-, medium- and long-term learning targets with learners. Consequently, progress reviews are insufficiently developmental and do not provide learners with clear advice on steps to take to improve.
- The quality of verbal feedback to learners is generally good. In the better sessions, tutors give detailed, developmental and encouraging written and verbal feedback. Where feedback is less effective, little written commentary is given.
- Learners' English, mathematical and functional skills are not systematically developed across all curriculum areas. In the better sessions, tutors integrate and support the development of learners' English and mathematical skills well. For example, in family learning, learners develop and use good literacy skills, and photography learners develop a good understanding and use of functional mathematics.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Learners receive well-structured and easily accessible pre-course information, advice and guidance, and tutors provide good on-course information, advice and guidance. Learners are clear about entry and progression opportunities, enabling them to make well-informed decisions about their development and future progression.

- Provision is inclusive. Tutors and learners treat each other with fairness and respect, and learners from diverse backgrounds work well together in lessons. However, tutors do not promote equality and diversity sufficiently across the curriculum and too few lessons include planned, well-integrated activity to increase learners' understanding of cultural differences.

## Visual arts

Good

## Community learning

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, and this is reflected in the consistently good success rates and high achievement for learners on non-accredited programmes in the visual arts.
- Tutors set high expectations which motivate and encourage learners to produce good artwork. Learners try new techniques, which are particularly experimental and innovative in life drawing sessions.
- Tutors provide good support for learners to develop practical and technical skills in the visual arts, especially when they have low confidence about making and evaluating artwork. Learners benefit from good individual instruction, advice, correction and project feedback in sessions.
- Tutors devise inspiring learning methods and tasks to encourage learners to explore their creativity, for example quick drawing challenges, life drawing using innovative mark making and self-portraiture work.
- Tutors enable learners to develop good understanding of composition, use of colour and the qualities of art materials. Tutors teach very effective techniques through choreographic sequences, guitar chord work and creative writing.
- Well-designed activities promote good practical approaches in painting, drawing and photography. However, methods to promote theory learning and wider art history knowledge are not developed to the same extent.
- Tutors ensure a good emphasis is placed on the practising and refining of skills, for example through highlighting choreographic elements, explaining steps carefully to support progress.
- Tutors use good expertise and resources to support learners, so that artwork evolves in ways which challenge learners' practice and meet their needs. However too few peer- and self-assessment activities take place. In a small minority of sessions, tutors ask too few effective questions to check learners' knowledge.
- Well-qualified and experienced practitioners, with detailed technical expertise and wide subject knowledge, facilitate a good range of aspirations among learners; most tutors set regular homework or practice regimes.
- In a small number of sessions, tutors develop effective learning maps to plan for different learners' needs, in order to tackle the aspects of work that need most development. But, in other sessions, targets do not have a sufficiently sharp emphasis on actions to ensure progress.
- Tutors provide encouraging and supportive feedback, although some feedback lacks a critical edge. Tutors' assessment is frequent and timely during sessions, although a small number of tutors do not plan enough regular assessment activities.
- Tutors film and photograph work to record progress; however, learners do not consistently use technology in subject areas to support learning, research and presentation of artwork. Learners and tutors who use the resources in the virtual learning environment do so to good effect.
- Learners benefit from good opportunities to develop their spoken and written functional English in creative writing, and functional mathematics within photography. This practice enhances learning for a small number of learners, but is not yet fully integrated into the visual and performing arts.

- Learners' views and ideas are valued, respected and included in welcoming sessions. Most tutors do not fully consider wider diversity in the arts. In some sessions, tutors provide images that reflect different cultures, but they do not extend this fully to promote and explore cultural diversity, for instance by considering the ways in which different societies and cultures make, view and consume the arts; or the impact of art on society.

## Modern foreign languages

Good

## Community learning

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, and this is reflected in the good outcomes for learners. Teaching staff are highly motivated, work hard on behalf of learners, know them well and devise appropriately demanding tasks with regular homework. Teachers are skilled at designing lessons to meet the needs of individual learners, with additional tasks for more advanced learners and adapted activities for those with particular difficulties. They use carefully chosen pairings to enable learners to support or challenge each other.
- Teachers pay very good attention to pronunciation and intonation. Most staff use the target language almost exclusively, with choral pronunciation exercises in the best lessons to develop learners' confidence in speaking. Most staff use many different ways of reinforcing the same learning to ensure that learners are speaking for as much of the time as possible during lessons.
- In most classes, teachers use a wide variety of lively activities, games, puzzles, video clips, role plays and songs in the foreign language that are easy to understand and make learning fun. One teacher perfects learners' use of the Spanish alphabet by getting the learners to sing it as a group to a salsa tune. Learners work in pairs, small groups, individually and as a whole group on different activities to create variety and reinforce learning.
- In the few less effective lessons, teachers introduce too many new words and structures for learners to remember. Others use too much English to explain rather than demonstrate grammar, do not use information technology (IT) imaginatively enough to show the language in action by native speakers, or rely too much on printed worksheets.
- Teachers devise initial assessments well to identify learners' starting points, individual interests and preferred ways of learning, and enter these in the service's very well-designed individual learning plans (ILPs). Teachers have a good knowledge of what each learner's specific aims are and the progress that each is making. However, not all staff encourage learners' independence by asking learners to reflect on and evaluate their learning, or to record this systematically in their ILPs.
- Feedback from teachers on learners' progress is very good. Learners get immediate helpful verbal feedback in class, with clear advice on how to improve both writing and speaking. With beginners, teachers focus very effectively on spoken fluency rather than accuracy, as long as the meaning is clear, in order to avoid discouraging learners. Most staff give encouraging written feedback to learners in their ILPs.
- All classes develop learners' ability to use numbers and to spell aloud confidently in the foreign language. Many teachers actively encourage learners to develop their language skills by referring them to useful websites for work at home. However, not all classes have access to IT or facilities to use technology interactively. A few teachers use grammatical terms with little awareness that some learners may be unfamiliar with the terms used.
- The service's advice, information and guidance service provides easily available and reliable pre-entry advice and progression information relating to accredited courses in local colleges or the universities.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in advanced level courses is good, with in-depth research by learners as well as teachers, and discussions on equalities topics such as immigration, integration, poverty, the environment and politics. Cultural aspects discussed

include history, literature and customs. In lower-level language courses, learners develop a satisfactory understanding of cultural differences between Britain and the countries of the languages they are learning.

## Community learning

Good

### Community learning

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, leading to good outcomes for learners. Success rates are good and improving. Learners enjoy their learning and develop greater confidence and self-esteem, and learn skills they can use more widely in their lives.
- Tutors have high levels of commitment, care and enthusiasm and use their expert knowledge and skill well to motivate learners and extend learning. Learners value highly the availability of contact with tutors between sessions; they are confident about receiving the help they need, during and between sessions. Tutors give good support for learners with disabilities, which ensures they fully participate in lessons.
- In the better sessions, tutors use a good variety of well-paced learning activities, and make effective use of targeted questions to consolidate understanding and extend learning. Tutors make good use of extension activities to meet the needs of more able learners; they skilfully manage group dynamics so that all learners' contributions are heard and valued. Where learning is less effective, the pace is too fast and questioning is over employed as a means of checking learners' understanding.
- Tutors promote and integrate health and safety, and safe working practices, well into lessons. For example, in family learning, learners are walked through evacuation procedures and tutors teach, reinforce and check the safe use of specialist equipment.
- Learning materials are clear and well produced. However, many fail to use real-life examples and thus are not sufficiently meaningful to learners' everyday lives and experience. Tutors make too little use of information and learning technology within sessions, such as the use of video clips, to enhance and stimulate learning. Tutors successfully promote the use of technology outside of the classroom.
- Learners develop good independent learning skills. For example, in English, learners who are in employment successfully develop relevant speaking, listening and vocabulary skills to support them in their work roles. In family learning, learners are developing and using good literacy skills.
- Tutors make good use of the three-week initial assessment course to understand learners' learning needs and place learners on the most appropriate level and type of course. For example, one learner is 'fast tracking' through English and mathematics courses to support his personal learning goal of enrolling on a higher education course.
- The setting of learners' individual targets for learning and assessment, recorded in individual learning plans, is inconsistently thorough. Where learning plans are used well, learners negotiate, set and regularly review their measurable and meaningful short- and longer-term learning goals. For example, in an English class, learners talked confidently about reviewing and updating their learning goals. Where individual learning plans are less effective, learning goals are too broad and are insufficiently personalised and measurable.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Learners value the comprehensive pre-course information, advice and guidance, which help them to make informed decisions about available learning options. For example, English for speakers of other language learners have a good understanding of their options for progression after their programme, and they progress well to appropriate course levels.
- Provision is inclusive and supportive; tutors and learners treat each other with fairness and respect. Where equality and diversity are promoted well, tutors successfully explore cultural



differences within the topic being taught, for example describing different national traditions within ESOL and family learning. However, too few lessons include planned, well-integrated activity to promote learners' understanding of equality and diversity.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Good

- Managers provide strong and effective leadership, particularly in their focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which is improving, and on the responsive and flexible development of the provision. They work hard with their staff team to establish sustainable improvements. A clear and ambitious vision for widening participation, with high expectations for learners' achievements and progression, is well established across the service.
- The service's priorities are aligned well to the council's corporate mission, with suitable support and challenge by senior officers and some increasing involvement of elected members. The head of service, with the support of the council's senior managers, determines business and council priorities as they relate to the adult and community learning provision. Appropriate targets are set to develop and improve the provision, with progress routinely monitored.
- Senior managers have secured good improvements since the last inspection. These have resulted in a more coherent range of provision, improved staff capacity, and an appropriate range of staff training. The strategy to develop managers from within the staff team through mentoring and training has been implemented very effectively, and is being similarly replicated for tutors. Operational management has significantly improved and is now thorough and comprehensive.
- Approximately one quarter of the service's provision is subcontracted. The subcontracting arrangements are highly effective overall in supporting increased participation by learners from under-represented groups, through specialised provision and learning opportunities for hard-to-reach learners. Clear targets are set for each subcontractor for recruitment, retention and achievement.
- Managers have established very productive relationships with the subcontractors, and provide good operational and curriculum support. They carry out routine monitoring to identify and resolve any problems with performance very effectively. Recently, managers have required that all subcontractors fully meet their contractual obligations.
- Good use is made of the lesson observations by managers to assess the quality of teaching and learning, to identify priorities for staff development and to identify and promote good practice. Managers give a high priority to planning and providing staff development. However, not all subcontractor and agency staff attend the required training and professional development sessions.
- Most written records of the observed teaching sessions accurately reflect the grade awarded. The service has established a useful arrangement with other services in the area to share views on the accuracy of observation grades awarded.
- Procedures to manage staff performance are largely rigorous, robust and well designed to improve teaching and learning, using well-developed arrangements for monitoring, support and professional development. These measures have not yet had sufficient impact to ensure that all teaching is at least good.
- The self-assessment process is effective and well established and results in a good quality improvement plan. Managers make good use of data to analyse performance at provider, subcontractor and course level. They utilise other available information, including the views of learners and staff and self-assessments produced by subcontractors, to inform their judgements. These judgements are mostly accurate and identify key strengths and areas for improvement in the self-assessment report.
- Curriculum management is good. The learning programmes are planned well to meet the needs of learners and the community. Managers are skilled in developing productive partnerships

which benefit learners, for example courses run on school premises, with trade unions, children's centres and Jobcentre Plus. Managers respond flexibly and effectively to opportunities to widen participation in learning.

- Equality and diversity are promoted well. Managers ensure the service maintains a focus on providing programmes for vulnerable learners and hard-to-reach groups and communities, through direct and subcontracted provision. Engagement with under-represented groups is expanding, and enrolments made by learners from minority ethnic groups, males, learners with disabilities and those aged 55 years and over have substantially increased.
- Good support is available for learners to enable them to attend courses in the community. Managers give careful consideration to the affordability of fees and course materials. The locations of learning venues are well planned, with accessibility thoroughly checked.
- Suitable policies for equality, bullying and harassment are in place and take account of the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislative requirements. There have been no recorded instances of bullying and harassment. Staff are provided with introductory training to raise their awareness of equality and diversity matters. However, observations of teaching, learning and assessment do not always sufficiently evaluate the promotion of equality and diversity to learners.
- The service meets its statutory requirements for keeping learners safe and gives close attention to health and safety of learners and staff.



## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Plymouth Adult and Community Learning Service

<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>	Community learning
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	2
Outcomes for learners	<b>2</b>	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>2</b>	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>2</b>	2
<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>		<b>Grade</b>
<b>Visual arts</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Modern foreign languages</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Community learning</b>		<b>2</b>

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Local authority							
<b>Age range of learners</b>	19+							
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: 14							
	Part-time: 7660							
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Tracy Hewett							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	November 2010							
<b>Website address</b>	www.plymouthoncourse.com							
<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Full-time</b>	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-
<b>Part-time</b>	4	2596	2	104	-	75	-	4
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	13	5	1	-	-	-		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	3							
<b>Full-time</b>	0							
<b>Part-time</b>	3							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	1992							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	186							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ YMCA Plymouth</li> <li>■ Shekinah Mission</li> <li>■ North Prospect Community Learning</li> <li>■ Open Doors</li> <li>■ Mountbatten Centre</li> <li>■ Keyham Community Partnership</li> <li>■ CROPS</li> <li>■ North Prospect Garage Project</li> <li>■ Lynher Training</li> </ul>							

## Contextual information

Plymouth Adult and Community Learning Service (PACLS) is located in the centre of Plymouth and operates from the department for education, learning and family support within Plymouth City Council. It offers community learning programmes across the city and its surrounds by direct delivery and through a variety of subcontractors. The service offers programmes in 13 subject areas, although learner numbers in some subject areas are very small. The subject areas inspected were the largest.

The population is predominantly White British. The city has a very mixed economy, with some very deprived areas.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Charles Clark HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the quality manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; 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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