

Swarthmore Education Centre

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		22–24 January 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Learners' outcomes are good on Swarthmore Education Centre's study programme. Learners overcome significant personal barriers to make good progress from very low starting points of achievement.
- Learners develop confidence and motivation to succeed. They enjoy their learning, attend regularly and improve their employability skills, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Tutors have a good understanding of learners' individual needs, use a range of interesting and stimulating classroom activities to help them learn, and give them good feedback to help them do better.
- Leaders and managers have a clear vision and commitment to developing the study programme to benefit young learners in the community facing some of the greatest difficulties in gaining qualifications and employment. The good communication, care and response to learners' needs demonstrate this.
- The well-managed study programme provides a coherent and challenging experience that takes good account of learners' individual needs and good opportunities to improve their qualifications and employment prospects.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The quality of teaching is generally good, but there are weaker features and none is outstanding. Weaker features include an underdeveloped use of technology to enliven learning and the overuse of worksheets.
- Tutors do not make enough use of the information they gather through initial assessment to plan lessons that fully meet all learners' needs.
- Tutors do not consistently set targets for learners that are clear and precise enough to help them progress to the best of their ability and to understand exactly what they have learned.
- Although most learners' English and mathematics work is marked sufficiently well, the practice is inconsistent between tutors.

- Managers do not use their quality procedures well enough to drive continuous improvement, particularly for teaching, learning and assessment. Procedures to ensure the safety and security of learners and staff are not sufficiently formalised.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of lesson observations by ensuring that that they include clear judgements on learning and assessment, and that they lead to effective action for improvement.
- Make more effective use of the results of initial assessment to plan lessons that meet all learners' needs.
- Improve the use of learning technology including interactive whiteboards, to enliven lessons, involve learners more fully in their learning, and promote learning through a wider range of audio and visual resources.
- Make better use of the self-assessment process and report by identifying strengths and areas for improvement in more detail, and ensuring that the report leads to a more ambitious action plan that drives quality improvement, particularly in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Improve arrangements to ensure the security of staff and safety of learners, especially younger learners and vulnerable adults, by carrying out a thorough assessment of risks and taking all reasonable steps to minimise these risks, particularly in the café and reception area.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Learners make good progress from very low levels of prior attainment. They have a wide range of significant learning difficulties and disabilities and often an unsatisfactory experience of school and a poor record of school attendance. Tutors set small but challenging targets to help learners progress to the best of their ability.
- Learners develop confidence and improve their employability skills, particularly in English and mathematics. For example, they are able to handle money when dealing with customers when on work placements in shops and cafes. They have improved perceptions of their future prospects and develop their social skills effectively, for example being able to travel independently and work as part of a team.
- Qualification success rates are high. All learners on the foundation learning programme in 2012/13 gained entry level qualifications in English and mathematics and a range of other units and most have progressed to the first year of the study programme.
- Learners attend regularly and on time. Tutors follow up absence from lessons promptly to maintain this good attendance.
- Learners gain a good understanding of basic mathematical concepts such as fractions, acquire skills for simple calculations, and are able to apply these to real situations such as budgeting and handling money. They develop their ability to read and write and are able to recognise how purpose affects writing styles.
- Learners benefit from well-managed work experience in a variety of settings, such as cafés and charity shops, gaining social and other skills relevant to their future employment.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

Independent learning and living skills**16-19 Study programme**

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. This reflects the good outcomes for learners. Staff have high expectations of learners and tutors set challenging activities that motivate learners very effectively. They successfully engage learners' attention and interest through a variety of activities, such as practical exercises and group discussions. Tutors explain things well and learning is sequenced effectively, building on prior learning.
- Tutors help learners to link theory to practice well through practical examples. This includes explaining the use of speech marks in persuasive and informative texts, and using clocks, cake and pizza to reinforce the concept of fractions. They apply their newly acquired skills confidently in lessons to state their views and to contribute to lively discussions.
- Tutors make too little use of interactive learning technology to stimulate learning and too much use of worksheets for individual activities. They do not offer learners enough opportunities to work independently.
- Learners value the good tutor support they receive and enjoy their learning. Additional learning support staff understand learners' needs and generally support them well. However, better guidance and direction by the tutors for their work would increase the benefit to the learners.
- Tutors make effective use of a range of assessment methods to promote learners' progress. They encourage learners to demonstrate their competence in English, mathematics and employability skills through a good variety of evidence including videos and photographs. The standard of learners' work is mostly good. In the best practice, tutors give learners detailed constructive feedback so that they understand how to improve. However, the quality and impact of feedback is inconsistent.
- Tutors make a thorough initial assessment of learners' current levels of experience and competence as well as their aspirations. They use this information effectively to develop well-constructed individual learning programmes and shape their individual learning plans. However, tutors make too little use of the initial assessment when planning lessons.
- Learners value highly the individual progress reviews and find them motivating. Although the majority of learners are clear about their progress and what they need to do next, the targets set for some learners are not clear enough.
- The centre places a high priority on improving learners' English and mathematical skills. Tutors use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to support skill development. For example, in an employability skills session learners used computer software to develop a presentation of their interview questions. Although most learners' work is marked sufficiently well to improve aspects such as spelling and grammar, to identify what they have done well and to explain where they need to improve, the practice is inconsistent between tutors.
- The centre provides learners with good information and advice before they enrol on the study programme to help them decide whether this is the best route to support their future learning and employment. Staff provide good guidance and support for personal and practical needs, including for behavioural and emotional issues, improving group relationships and making travel arrangements. Careers advisers provide impartial advice on the next steps in their learning and progression.
- The centre promotes equality and diversity very well. The programme reinforces positive attitudes and an ethos that values individual differences.

The effectiveness of leadership and management**Good**

- Leaders and managers are very committed to developing study programmes for learners, most of whom have significant barriers to learning and employment. They are fully aware of learners' learning difficulties and/or disabilities and have well-structured programmes to help them gain the maximum benefit.
- Managers are particularly proactive in seeking additional funding, with varying degrees of success. As a result of one successful application, the trustees and the management team received training in strategic planning and have produced a clear five-year strategic plan. However, managers have not been able to obtain funding to install a lift in the building in order that learners with mobility difficulties are able to access the recently refurbished second-floor training suite.
- The board of trustees is enthusiastic about the study programme. It has approved funding for improving the accommodation and purchasing additional ICT equipment. Although members of the board take a close interest in health and safety and finance issues, they are less aware of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Currently, there are too few trustees.
- Procedures for improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are underdeveloped. Because observations of teaching, learning and assessment occur in one month a year, the period for judging their quality is too restricted. The observation reports are insufficiently judgemental and too little importance is placed on learning and learners' progress.
- The good, communication between leaders, managers and staff ensures that the programme runs smoothly and that staff respond to learners' views and concerns. Staff use their daily and weekly meetings to evaluate the delivery of the study programme and make changes to meet learners' needs more successfully. For example, managers changed the timetable to avoid clashes between the arts and crafts session and work placements.
- The self-assessment process is sufficiently consultative. However, the self-assessment report does not clearly identify the key strengths and areas for development and is not rigorous enough to drive improvement through a comprehensive and ambitious quality improvement plan. The teaching observation system does not focus clearly enough on learning and assessment.
- The study programme provides a coherent and challenging experience for learners, giving them a good opportunity to improve their qualifications and employment prospects in addition to developing their personal and social skills. Good attention is also given to improving their competency and qualifications in English and mathematics and to the importance of working at progressively higher levels.
- Work experience is a well-managed, integral part of the programme. Tutors match learners successfully to a range of placement opportunities. Staff recognise the need to increase the number of work placements and prepare those who are not yet ready for work experience through work 'tasters' and trials.
- The provider is particularly successful in recruiting a wide range of learners to the study programme. Equality and diversity are fundamental to the ethos of the centre where bullying, discrimination and unfair treatment are not acceptable. Managers and tutors have a very good knowledge of the learners and their barriers to learning and employment.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and are mostly satisfactory. However, risk has not been formally assessed and recorded, and not all staff in contact with learners have received training. Learners' safety and staff security are not sufficiently assured in the community café and reception area on the ground floor. Members of the public have access to these areas whenever the building is open, including times when the only member of staff present is serving in the coffee bar. Staff do not always ensure that the centre's procedures for signing the visitors' book are followed.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Swarthmore Education Centre

<p>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</p> <p>1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate</p>	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2	NA	NA	2	NA	2	NA	NA	NA
Outcomes for learners	2	NA	NA	2	NA	2	NA	NA	NA
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	NA	NA	2	NA	2	NA	NA	NA
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	NA	NA	2	NA	2	NA	NA	NA

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Independent living and leisure skills	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 7							
	Part-time: N/A							
CEO	Ms Maggi Butterworth							
Date of previous inspection	January 2008							
Website address	www.swarthmore.org.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	7	15	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Part-time	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	NA		NA		NA			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Contextual information

Swarthmore Education Centre, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, was founded by members of the Quaker movement in 1909. Located in the centre of Leeds in a Grade 2 listed building, the centre provides community learning as a sub-contractor, and is directly funded to deliver the study programme for young people and adults with disabilities.

Leeds has a population of 751,500, including minority ethnic groups representing about 17% of the total population. The proportion of people with a qualification at NVQ level 4 or above is similar to the country as a whole, but higher than for the region. The proportion of people with five GCSEs with A* to C grades including English and mathematics or the equivalent is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Jan Smith HMI

Jan Smith of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Curriculum 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 two 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 relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the study programme provision for which the provider holds the contract and graded the sector subject area 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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