

City Gateway

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		16–19 March 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Outstanding-1
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- the proportion of apprentices that successfully complete their apprenticeship is high
- tutors prepare learners for employment exceptionally well; the large majority progress to work or further training after completing their courses
- learners enjoy returning to education or training and gain self-esteem and confidence through their achievements
- the vast majority of teaching, learning and assessment is good or better
- tutors use their in-depth knowledge of learners' starting points and personal circumstances to plan learning very well
- safeguarding arrangements are outstanding; tutors and assessors provide outstanding support to help learners re-engage with learning and achieve their goals, despite the many and complex barriers to education that a high proportion of learners have
- directors, leaders and trustees set extremely high standards throughout the organisation to help learners transform their lives and gain employment
- strong and effective partnerships with large corporate employers in the professional and financial sector benefit both learners and the local community.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- too many apprentices do not complete their training by the planned end-date and the proportion that are currently not working is too high
- too few learners on mathematics courses at level 1 achieve their qualifications
- assessors do not focus sufficiently well on how apprentices can apply English and mathematics to the workplace
- managers do not evaluate the quality of workplace learning sufficiently well
- there are too few work placement opportunities available to meet the demand of learners waiting to start, or continue, an apprenticeship.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Tutors should use their knowledge of apprentices' starting points to plan an end-date for the framework that matches the skills and needs of each individual apprentice and the opportunities for learning in their work place.
- Ensure that tutors use the results from initial assessments in mathematics more effectively to target those skills that individual learners need to develop.
- Equip all assessors with the skills and confidence to develop the understanding of learners of how they can apply English and mathematics in the workplace.
- Managers must ensure that the high levels of quality assurance in place for the adult skills provision are equally as well applied to apprenticeships.
- Managers should develop further partnerships with employers to increase the number of employment opportunities for apprentices.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- City Gateway provides learning and training in three broad strands. Currently, 218 learners are on apprenticeships at either intermediate or advanced level. The vast majority of these are on business administration frameworks. Around 300 adult learners each year take mainly short courses designed to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and to help prepare them for employment. Finally, a small number of learners at the Women's Project focus on improving their literacy skills through English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses.
- City Gateway provides outstanding opportunities for learners with many, and often complex, barriers to education or training. Most learners have had poor experiences of education and have low levels of prior attainment. For the vast majority of these learners, the rapid steps that they make in gaining high levels of confidence and self-esteem are equally as important and significant as the qualifications that they achieve. Learners attend well and arrive on time. The large majority make very good progress in relation to their starting point.
- The proportion of apprentices successfully completing their training declined in 2013/14 but remained high. The proportion that complete by their planned end-date declined sharply in 2013/14 and requires improvement. Female apprentices are more successful than males in achieving their framework.
- The proportion of apprentices currently not in work is too high. However, where learners are obliged to take a break from their training due to losing their job, tutors continue to provide excellent support to help them find another job despite often very challenging circumstances. This support results in around one third of these learners successfully completing their training who otherwise would not have done so. The majority of apprentices who complete their framework secure employment, often with the same employer.
- A high proportion of apprentices achieve the functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics that they require for the achievement of their framework. The majority of apprentices benefit from completing these qualifications in the first three months of their training. For a small minority of apprentices, this timescale is too short and they have insufficient opportunity to consolidate the skills that they require to have the best chance of success in securing future employment.
- The proportion of learners that achieve English and mathematics functional skills qualifications as part of the adult skills programme is broadly in line with those of similar providers, except for mathematics at level 1 which is low. For a small minority of learners who have already achieved

qualifications at level 2 in English and/or mathematics, tutors do not identify the skills that learners could develop further so that they can be even more effective in their future employment.

- Outcomes for unemployed adults are very high. Learners develop all the skills that they need to research jobs, submit high-quality applications and prepare themselves for interviews. Alongside this, learners secure outstanding skills development, for example in leadership and resilience. Through a step-by-step progression, learners develop these skills very well and are able to give good examples, when completing job application forms and attending interviews, of how they have utilised these skills. Where appropriate, learners acquire good levels of information technology skills, such as word processing and spreadsheet applications.
- Learners at the Women's Project make exceptional progress in developing their literacy skills through a wide range of relevant courses. Many of these learners progress rapidly through several levels and then into vocational qualifications in, for example, childcare and beauty. The wider benefits to these learners in relation to building their confidence and self-esteem are outstanding. The contribution that this project makes to local community cohesion is excellent.
- The progression rate of learners into employment or further training or learning is very high. Tutors continue to work tirelessly with learners who have not found employment long after they have completed their training or qualifications. In the current year, they have successfully placed a further third of those learners who had not secured a positive destination.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- On most classroom-based programmes learners make good progress in their studies, based on their prior experiences and achievements. They talk with confidence about the wide range of practical skills they have gained since joining City Gateway. They take much pride in their work, persevere to complete tasks on time, respond very positively to the high expectations of their tutors and are ambitious. They contribute well, work collaboratively, improve their punctuality and display high levels of commitment. As a result, outcomes for learners are good.
- Tutors and assessors act as positive role models for learners and have a very good understanding of the complex barriers to education that many of them face. They help learners to develop resilience and self-belief, ensuring that they take full responsibility for their learning goals and are able to achieve well beyond what they thought they were capable of. For example, when a few learners arrived late for their English lesson, the tutor challenged them to reflect on why lateness would be inappropriate behaviour in the workplace.
- Tutors provide stimulating learning in which learners develop effective communication and team-working skills. In the very high proportion of good or better lessons, tutors plan activities carefully with incremental steps and interactive tasks that enable learners to reflect, enjoy and achieve. Learners make very good progress, develop vocational skills and knowledge well and enjoy their studies. More-able learners do challenging extension activities that include helping their peers or completing more complex tasks.
- In the very small proportion of less effective lessons, tutors do not design tasks sufficiently well to challenge the more-able learners, and do not ensure that quieter learners participate in the lesson. Tutors do not question learners sufficiently well to confirm their understanding or to reinforce learning.
- Tutors' use of information and learning technology (ILT) is underdeveloped. Although interactive whiteboards are provided in each training room, tutors do not use them consistently well to stimulate learners' interest and enhance their learning. For example, on employability programmes, tutors do not fully exploit ILT to support learners in tutorial sessions, record notes, refer them to appropriate websites to research companies or encourage them to check spellings and meanings of words.

- Tutors' verbal feedback to learners helps them to understand what they are capable of, and provides encouragement to help them persevere and achieve. Written feedback is not always effective in guiding learners on what they need to improve and how to go about it.
- Tutors' assessment of learners starting points is very comprehensive on adult skills courses, and highly effective in identifying learners' additional learning support needs. This ensures that tutors give comprehensive and timely support to all learners. However, for apprentices, assessors do not use the results of the initial assessment well enough to monitor each learner's progress
- Tutors provide information, advice and guidance to learners that are very effective in helping them progress from low levels of prior achievement to apprenticeships or further education. Well-designed programmes, focused on gaining employment, provide very good progression routes and ensure that learners take courses that suit their needs and life circumstances very well.
- All staff provide outstanding care and support that are instrumental in breaking down barriers to learning, reflecting the core aims of the organisation, that learners rightly describe as life-changing. Staff work very closely with a very wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies to provide early and highly effective intervention that supports learners with a large range of life challenges, such as substance and alcohol misuse, mental health, domestic violence and sexual exploitation. External partners value how the highly effective and knowledgeable City Gateway staff contribute to the local multi-agency joint work, and are instrumental in getting the most disaffected young people in the locality to use services, develop employability and social skills, build resilience and learn to make positive decisions to transform their lives.
- Most tutors equip learners well with the skills they need to apply mathematics in the workplace. For example, learners on employability programmes calculated accurately with fractions, decimals and percentages, which they then used to determine discounts in a retail situation. A minority of assessors do not ensure that apprentices understand how they can use their English and mathematics skills in the workplace.
- Learners develop good communication and reading skills and use appropriate subject terminology with confidence, preparing them well for the work environment. However, tutors and assessors do not always correct errors in spelling, use of capital letters and punctuation in learners' assignments.
- Tutors work highly effectively with all learners to develop their readiness for work. Apprentices benefit from a programme of activities and learning prior to beginning their training. It identifies the particular skills that individual learners need to develop to be ready for the workplace and tailors support to ensure that all learners are best placed to complete successfully their training. Learners gain a good understanding of the world of work through volunteering activities. Guest speakers help learners enhance their knowledge of their subject, for example through talks to sports learners about nutrition.
- Staff foster a safe, welcoming learning environment. As a result, learners express their viewpoints freely during challenging discussions on equality themes, display high levels of mutual respect and develop their knowledge of the wider world. For example, in a sport session, learners discussed how gender and ethnicity can impact on the measurement of body fat. In an English session, learners presented their views on how girls are denied access to education in some countries. However, learners do not sufficiently explore diversity beyond race and gender and do not discuss sufficiently how discrimination can have impact in the workplace.

Foundation mathematics**19+ learning programmes
Apprenticeships**

Good

Teaching, learning and assessment in foundation mathematics are good because:

- in the current year, learners are making sustained progress in relation to their starting point and, as a result, their outcomes have improved, particularly at level 2 where they are now high; a large majority of learners gain in confidence in applying their mathematics skills which helps them to progress to employment or further training
- tutors' high expectations ensure that learners are very ambitious for what they can achieve; the emphasis that tutors place on learners finding work is highly motivating and focuses learners on this long term goal, whilst ensuring that they understand the importance of developing their mathematical skills
- tutors use a variety of practical activities and effective teaching and learning strategies to interest and motivate learners; as a result, a majority of learners enjoy studying mathematics
- tutors frequently check learners' understanding, review their learning and encourage them to ask questions and explore different methods of solving mathematical problems; consequently, learners develop a thorough understanding of how the work they are doing can be applied in a variety of situations
- tutors develop learners' English well, ensuring learners can read the questions and correctly interpret them in order to carry out calculations; they do not only make sure learners know the meaning of words and phrases, but also that they can work out the sequence of what they need to do, for example learners interpret formulae in words before applying them
- tutors use thorough initial assessment to ascertain learners' previous achievements, and take account of the length of time since they were previously in education, to ensure learners have sufficient introduction to studying before enrolling on mathematics courses
- tutors understand learners' individual learning needs very well and provide highly effective one-to-one support in lessons, helping learners to make good progress; furthermore, learners with a variety of personal and educational problems are supported well so that they can continue studying even after their course has ended.

Teaching, learning and assessment in foundation mathematics are not yet outstanding because:

- the proportion of learners who achieve mathematics qualifications at level 1 is low
- tutors' written feedback is insufficiently detailed and does not always include guidance on what learners need to do to help them improve and achieve their qualification; tutors do not instruct learners to correct their mistakes and use these as reference for future calculations
- assessors are less skilled than classroom tutors at checking apprentices' understanding, reviewing their learning, monitoring their progress or ensuring that they have an understanding of how mathematics is relevant to them in the workplace
- tutors' use of ILT is limited; they do not use it sufficiently well to develop learners' ability to work independently.

Employability training**19+ learning programmes**

Outstanding

Teaching, learning and assessment in employability training are outstanding because:

- a very high proportion of learners successfully complete their qualifications and progress to further learning, employment, apprenticeships or traineeships
- the highly motivational and energetic tutors are exceptional role models who inspire learners and, as a result, ensure that they gain in confidence and develop highly effective team working skills, resilience and self-esteem which prepare them very well for employment; learners can explain fluently the interview questions an employer might ask, suggesting well-constructed responses
- learners receive exceptionally high levels of personal and educational support which helps them to become confident, self-assured and articulate; they can explain well the personal and employability skills they have acquired and the good progress they have made
- learners receive particularly good and highly effective information, advice and guidance throughout all stages of their learning; tutors guide and advise learners exceptionally well about employment requirements
- classroom teaching is consistently good or better because tutors make learning interesting, active and stimulating; tutors challenge learners well to develop their thinking skills and move on to more complex work
- learners gain a very good understanding of the world of work and become much more assured of their career choices through informative talks from employers and structured visits to high-profile workplaces in and around Canary Wharf
- learners participate enthusiastically in volunteering activities; for example, a learner used newly acquired mail merge skills to prepare letters to raise support for a charity
- tutors make particularly accurate assessments of learners' starting points; they identify learners' current skills and personal circumstances and use this information very effectively so that learners with different needs and abilities all make excellent progress
- tutors use a well-designed and highly effective profiler to identify learners' competences in job readiness and to measure their progress over time; learners know exactly what they have achieved and any aspects that they need to improve
- tutors' thorough verbal feedback is helpful and informative, and their written feedback ensures learners know where they can improve; in a lesson on interview preparation, the tutor's feedback encouraged the learners to explore the topic in depth to extend their knowledge
- learners study in well-equipped classrooms; tutors prepare interesting and effective worksheets and make good use of ILT
- tutors focus well on learners' development of functional skills in English so that they can see the importance of correct language use, for example the importance of accurate spelling and vocabulary
- learners have a particularly good awareness of both equality and diversity; they collaborate and interact extremely well, demonstrating very high levels of respect, consideration and tolerance for each other's views.

Administration

Good

Apprenticeships

Teaching, learning and assessment in administration are good because:

- a high proportion of apprentices successfully complete their frameworks; they develop good work-related practical skills in using equipment correctly, working with customers and following legislative requirements such as banking regulations
- partnerships with employers are effective, with employers making an important contribution to apprentices' progress, for example by integrating the apprenticeship with their own internal development programme to support learners' long-term career goals

- apprentices significantly improve their self-confidence and develop strong personal and social skills in their communication with service users, colleagues, line managers and assessors
- assessors have a good understanding of the apprentices' organisations and job roles and use this knowledge well to provide good individualised support
- assessors understand individual apprentices' learning needs very well and provide highly effective one-to-one support on a very frequent basis, helping all apprentices make good progress; for example, in agreement with the line manager an assessor provides additional English sessions in the apprentices' lunch break to support the development of the apprentices' language skills
- tutors recruit apprentices very carefully; interview processes are thorough and tutors use the information gathered very effectively to develop a framework suited to each learner; they match apprentices well to employers and, as a result, a high number of learners progress into employment
- apprentices enjoy their learning, develop their confidence and talk enthusiastically about how this benefits them and their work; they recognise and appreciate how their classroom-based studies help them to enhance their performance at work and the beneficial impact this has on their career development.

Teaching, learning and assessment in administration are not yet outstanding because:

- not enough learners complete their apprenticeship in the planned time and too many learners have taken a break from their apprenticeship and have not yet returned to employment
- tutors do not use written feedback sufficiently well to challenge apprentices to develop their skills beyond the requirements of the qualification; for example, tutors ask apprentices to identify a range of communication tools, but do not guide them to consider how these might be adapted in other workplaces
- assessors do not provide enough support to apprentices to reinforce the development of their skills in English and mathematics and their application in the workplace
- tutors do not ensure that learners spend enough time developing skills to support and enhance their ability to work on their own; too many learners rely solely on their assessors for information and resources.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- Leaders and senior managers have a very strong commitment to achieving the organisation's vision and values. They set very high expectations of managers and staff to ensure local young people, who are often disadvantaged, disaffected and disillusioned, have the best opportunity to progress in their careers and with their personal development.
- Tutors respond very well to these expectations, demonstrating high levels of enthusiasm that motivates learners to try their very best. Strategic planning is coherent, with very clear aims and objectives. Managers set ambitious targets in relation to achievement, retention and staff performance, and staff make very good progress towards achieving them.
- Leaders have put in place well-structured management arrangements, with very effective collaboration between departments. Trustees focus well on monitoring the overall performance of the organisation and, to promote further improvement, leaders are undertaking a well-considered project in conjunction with an external consultant to identify best practice in governance. Relevant criteria are in place to assess and improve the impact of the trustees' role in how the trustees contribute to the overall self-assessment process.
- Outstanding partnership arrangements with large, local, corporate employers, particularly those in the professional and financial sector, are extremely effective and at the core of this provision. These employers support teaching and learning very effectively by providing volunteers to teach in sessions, raising awareness of current industry practice and developing learners' skills such as

for interviews. They are also closely involved in planning bespoke learning programmes to meet their own needs and provide sponsorship, including funding for additional safeguarding officers. City Gateway managers are currently working with a group of stock exchange employers to develop learning programmes to support progression into employment in the professional services sector.

- Too few vacancies are currently available to meet the needs of a large number of apprentices who are currently awaiting jobs. The large corporate employers, who historically provide most of the apprenticeship places, cannot meet the demand. Managers have identified a large number of local small- and medium-sized employers and action is underway to involve more of these, but this is not yet resulting in sufficient opportunities.
- Staff performance management measures are mostly very effective. Managers' use of data enables them to monitor closely performance against a variety of key performance indicators, including achievement and progression. The classroom-based learning observation process is comprehensive and developmental, with clear actions for staff improvement and appropriate support arrangements in place. Managers make good use of labour market information, as well as conducting research projects, to identify employment trends to inform future curriculum development.
- The data that managers use to monitor apprentices' progress are insufficiently detailed. Managers do not have a sufficiently thorough understanding of apprentices' progress overall and too many apprentices do not achieve their qualification on time. The supervision meetings are not sufficiently effective in identifying individual apprentices' progress or in planning appropriate actions where progress is slow.
- Staff training is good. A wide variety of well-considered, developmental workshops take place, covering topics such as classroom behaviour, cultural awareness and the integration of English and mathematics into vocational lessons. Managers encourage staff to develop their knowledge and skills further by allowing time to attend valuable external activities
- Arrangements to safeguard learners are outstanding. Managers maintain thorough recording systems, both for staff checks and for incidents. The safeguarding manager sits on the local safeguarding board. The safeguarding team routinely attends learners' induction, providing additional information and support, including budgeting and travel plans. Resources are of a very good standard and shared with learners and employers very effectively. Productive partnerships exist with outside agencies, such as the police who have recently delivered training to raise awareness of radicalisation. Managers and staff have a very good understanding of local issues, such as gangs, which they use well to support learners. Learners receive good guidance on e-safety and feel safe, both in learning and in the workplace.
- Although inclusive and broadly accurate, with good use made of learner feedback, self-assessment has a too-narrow focus on classroom learning and does not sufficiently evaluate workplace learning. The improvement plan for the apprenticeship provision does not plan for improvements in workplace teaching, learning and assessment. The staff observation process for assessors only includes their assessment practice and does not effectively judge the quality of workplace learning or the learner appraisals. The quality improvement plan for mathematics is improving this provision. Learners receive more course time and extra help from a special educational needs support worker, leading to an upward trend in achievements, particularly at level 2.
- The strong ethos to provide equality of opportunity for all and celebrate diversity is evident throughout the organisation. Comprehensive systems are in place to promote actively equality and diversity, and a working group ensures the strategy is effectively implemented. Managers analyse data carefully to identify any participation and achievement gaps. Staff have a very good understanding of cultural issues and deal with these very sensitively.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

City Gateway

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	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	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-
Outcomes for learners	2	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Foundation mathematics	2
Employability training	1
Administration	2

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	688							
Principal/CEO	Mr Eddie Stride							
Date of previous inspection	November 2010							
Website address	www.citygateway.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+
	-	19	-	42	-	19	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	44	83	43	48	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	2		1		3			
Number of learners aged 14-16	-							
Full-time	-							
Part-time	-							
Number of community learners	-							
Number of employability learners	-							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Contextual information

City Gateway is an independent learning provider offering alternative education provision for learners aged 16 and above. The large majority of learners are returning to education after either having achieved no formal qualifications or having disengaged from mainstream education. A very high proportion of learners attending City Gateway have complex or significant personal, social or learning difficulties. City Gateway was established as a charity to provide apprenticeships, social enterprises and women's projects designed to help the people in Tower Hamlets into employment. City Gateway is in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets where levels of unemployment are high, but attainment of five GCSEs grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, at the age of 16, is slightly above the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Stewart Jackson HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Chief Operations Officer 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 relevant 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:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012

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