

Leicestershire County Council

Local authority

Inspection dates		11–15 May 2015
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 develop good personal, social and work-related skills that improve their confidence and prospects for further learning and employment enabling them to lead more fulfilling lives
- most learners achieve well, and some exceptionally well
- non-accredited programmes such as 'learning for well-being' and 'family learning' make a significant impact on the lives of people of the local communities that need most help and support
- staff provide excellent information, advice and guidance enabling learners to enrol on the right programmes, receive high-quality support and become aware of careers they could enter
- managers and staff, in strong partnerships with other agencies, conduct a thorough analysis of the learning needs of the local residents and provide a very broad range of programmes in their neighbourhoods to meet the needs of targeted groups
- learners and tutors make good use of a range of learning resources, including e-learning, to promote independent learning and improve learners' personal and employability skills
- aspirational leaders and managers have consolidated the good provision across all curriculum areas and have improved the quality of work-based learning and outcomes for apprentices.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- governance arrangements are insufficiently effective as the elected members do not provide sufficient challenge and support to managers on improving the outcomes and quality of provision
- a few staff do not set frequent, specific and measurable short-term personal learning targets that encourage learners to make faster progress
- managers are not prompt enough to re-observe those few tutors whose lessons require improvement
- managers do not make systematic use of data to monitor learners' destinations and progression in order to plan learning and evaluate the impact of learning on their prospects.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve rapidly the governance arrangements, so that local authority senior managers and elected representatives provide greater challenge and support for the managers of the service by focusing on those areas such as outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning which are key to the learners' experience.
- Create a sense of greater urgency among managers to risk-rate all tutors and take prompt action to re-observe those tutors whose teaching, learning and assessment are less than good, so that all learners continue to benefit from high quality learning.
- Enable all staff to set frequent and on-going specific and measurable personal learning objectives based on learners' progress to help them achieve their goals.
- Ensure that managers and staff collect and use management information on the progression and destination of the learners systematically in order to measure the impact of learning on learners.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Leicestershire Adult Learning Service (LALS) provides a range of courses predominantly for adults on behalf of Leicestershire County Council. Classroom-based learning makes up 44% of the total provision. The largest subject area, 'foundations for learning and life' accounts for nearly half of the classroom-based learning, closely followed by information communication technology (ICT). Community learning accounts for 53% of the total provision and includes programmes in 'learning for well-being' and 'family learning'. Apprenticeships make up 3% of the provision.
- Success rates are high in all subject areas including foundations for learning and life. Success rates are outstanding in health and social care and ICT for users. Success rates for the large number of learners at entry level are very high. This level of success helps to engage learners into learning, boosts their confidence and prepares them well for further learning in other subject areas.
- ICT learners develop strong confidence in using computers and undertake a range of tasks such as email, word-processing and internet use to make bookings on-line, research information and pay their bills safely and efficiently using secure websites. These skills enhance their opportunities to seek employment.
- Success rates for functional skills in English and mathematics at entry level, level 1 and level 2 remain good, as identified at the previous inspection. Learners carefully consolidate their skills and improve their opportunities to progress to higher levels.
- Apprentices produce high standards of work and develop into their roles very quickly. Many of them have secured promotions while on the programme. Employers value their work and challenge them to do well. Success rates for apprentices in 'supporting teaching and learning' are outstanding. Apprentices play a valuable role in schools, helping out in a variety of roles.
- Learners on family learning programmes improve their parenting skills, learn about what their children are taught and how, and develop the confidence to support their children's learning at home. This contributes to their children making faster progress than before.
- By attending a wide range of programmes of learning, learners achieve significant personal growth, gain confidence, improve their self-esteem and develop valuable skills. This helps them to enrich their lives and improves the life chances of their families. By providing learning in their

neighbourhood, staff and managers have made a significant contribution to the lives of many disenfranchised learners such as those from 'troubled families'.

- Families that face a range of barriers engage well in learning and achieve good outcomes. This leads to reduced anti-social behaviour, a greater level of engagement into learning and education, and improved employment prospects through employability programmes. This contributes to a reduction in pressure on enforcement agencies, such as social services, police and probation.
- Learning for well-being programmes provide useful skills such as healthy eating, cooking and exercise for families that face challenging circumstances. This helps them to adopt healthy lifestyles. Courses such as 'back to basics' and 'food and friendship' run in community houses help develop social skills. Learners suffering from mental ill health and dementia learn to manage their condition and lead fulfilling lives through programmes run in conjunction with the Recovery College.
- A high proportion of learners progress onto higher-level programmes and develop very good and essential employability skills. Learners from various programmes with an employability focus undertake valuable voluntary work, a useful stepping stone to permanent employment. Progression into part-time employment and onto further education is also good.
- Through high-quality, tailor-made programmes for clients on Job Seekers' and Employment Support Allowance at the jobcentre in Loughborough, learners develop a good understanding of various employment fields, job roles in them and how to apply for such positions. They become adept at searching jobs on the internet using key words and ensuring that they protect their identity.
- Young learners on traineeship programmes achieve excellent outcomes. They engage well in programmes, raising their aspirations after receiving outstanding support, advice and guidance. Many learners realise the importance of improving their skills and qualifications in mathematics and English. A few secure places on apprenticeship programmes and others enrol on college courses, raising their aspirations to enter careers. They gain essential skills that employers value, such as good timekeeping, attention to detail, reliability and good customer service.
- Attendance is good on most programmes, but low for learners on functional skills and modern foreign languages.
- Managers are aware of the low levels of achievement among a small number of learners aged 16 to 18, and learners from Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi groups, and have taken appropriate action. A few apprentices make slow progress, particularly those aged 24 or over.
- A small minority of tutors do not help learners to identify and set specific and measurable personal learning objectives. Although learners are making good progress in their learning, it is difficult for some learners to specify what exactly they have learnt and how they use it to improve their well-being.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, and this is reflected in learners' success and progression into further training, and in their development of employability and personal skills.
- Staff use their experience and skills well to deliver teaching, learning and support which meets learners' needs closely. Tutors have a detailed knowledge of their learners and they use it well to provide engaging activities in lessons, which learners enjoy. This develops high levels of self-confidence and esteem. They enjoy working with their peers and develop good social skills.
- Tutors and support workers provide good levels of individual support and useful verbal feedback to learners on their progress. Learners appreciate this feedback and the guidance to improve further. However, a small minority of tutors do not always set targets for learners to achieve in lessons or plan individualised tasks to improve skills or knowledge based on learners' abilities.

- Tutors are skilful at devising engaging, purposeful and relevant activities that challenge and inspire learners. Learners become confident and develop valuable skills that they can use immediately. For example, in a family literacy lesson, the tutor skilfully developed learning activities that made parents aware of how phonics help develop children's reading skills. Parents developed confidence and skills in supporting their children with their reading at home.
- Learners participate in classes very well. They become inspired and continue their learning and progress outside the classroom. Although the large majority of learners show high levels of independence and autonomy, tutors do not challenge and develop the more-able learners, and fail to enable lower-ability learners to work more independently.
- In the few less successful lessons, learners are often inactive and tutors do not sufficiently challenge many learners. As a result, learners do not make the progress they are capable of. For example in a functional English lesson, tutors did not sufficiently challenge learners to extend their knowledge and comprehension sufficiently when describing what they saw in a picture. Tutors do not extend learners' knowledge about the range of transferable skills they already have and their employability potential.
- Managers have developed a very successful and dynamic virtual learning environment for the benefit of learners and tutors. This includes some useful, interactive materials which support learners in developing independent learning outside their classes and provides tutors with lesson activities that promote best practice. For example, after on-line initial assessment of their functional skills needs, learners pursue an individualised e-learning programme which they complete quickly.
- Assessment in lessons is mostly thorough. Tutors make learners aware of how well they are performing through frequent verbal feedback that is sensitive, positive and offers guidance. This helps learners to improve their confidence. For example in functional English and mathematics, tutors mark learners' work carefully and in the best examples, provide helpful written feedback on how to improve further.
- The quality of written feedback on some courses and curriculum areas requires improvement. It is often cursory, and in a few cases tutors' handwriting is difficult to read. Learners cannot always remember the verbal feedback so that they cannot act on it to improve their performance rapidly. In the best examples, tutors provide, by email, frequent written feedback with helpful comments on how to improve.
- Tutors provide effective support for learners with low English and mathematics skills; however, a few tutors do not routinely embed effectively these skills in lessons.
- Inspectors agreed with the learners that the quality of information, advice and guidance is first rate. Staff provide detailed information on courses including entry requirements, conduct initial assessment accurately and place learners on correct courses. They follow up group advice and guidance sessions with an offer of individual guidance and advice for learners that helps them develop their next steps in learning or progression. Young learners re-engage into learning and employment having received excellent careers advice and guidance, a substantial period of work experience and an awareness of the employment market.
- Staff and managers are highly effective at providing learning programmes for learners who have not benefitted from such opportunities in their earlier lives. They promote the benefits of learning to improve the well-being of adults living in poorer neighbourhoods or on benefits, or those suffering ill-health or other barriers to participation in learning such as isolation.
- Staff have good awareness of diversity issues and embed these in most lessons effectively. For example in a health and well-being lesson – learners with mental ill health used the theme of Japanese poetry (Haiku) to create and write their own poem, ensuring the correct number of syllables were included in each line. This enhanced learners' understanding of Japanese culture and the precise art of writing poetry and attention to detail.

Independent living and leisure skills

19+ learning programmes

Good

Teaching, learning and assessment in work with learners with learning difficulties and disabilities are good because:

- learners make very good progress in developing social, communication, independence and work skills
- learners with speech difficulties and non-verbal learners develop good communication skills using signs, body language and eye contact; they enjoy their learning and become confident to make clear choices and initiate actions instead of relying on others to help and direct their lives.
- teachers have high expectations of learners' ability to engage with the world on equal terms with other adults; in choosing learning materials, teachers make strong use of a wide variety of images representing minority groups, both genders and many disabilities to highlight the achievements of people
- learners understand society and their communities well and do not let disability be a barrier to their enjoyment of life and participation of their civic duties; a group of learners spent the weeks before the election learning about the political parties and holding a mock election, with the result that 62% of learners voted in the general election for the first time; another group researched the stories of a local battalion during the First World War and presented these to museum visitors
- teachers are well qualified, experienced and passionate about their specialism; they know the learners well, understand and use individuals' preferred methods of communicating and plan carefully for each learner, promoting all achievable aspects of independence
- support staff employed by the service are skilled and very effective; they use their time with teachers before learning starts very effectively to understand their role in ensuring full participation by all learners in the lessons
- staff use a variety of stimulating learning materials, making full use of images to ensure their accessibility by learners who do not read; the use of information technology and tablet computers in particular has brought much greater autonomy to learners' lives
- teachers integrate mathematics skills well into practical activities for everyday living such as measuring lengths of string for attaching to bird feeders, and work very effectively to develop learners' vocabulary and understanding
- staff recap and reinforce learning well and give frequent positive verbal feedback to learners on their progress; they complete well designed daily records of progress with learners that also show what still needs to be done
- managers have worked in partnership with a wide variety of voluntary, statutory and private organisations to provide tailored programmes for groups; this has greatly improved the LALS capacity to meet specific needs.

Teaching, learning and assessment in work with learners with learning difficulties and disabilities are not yet outstanding because:

- the independence skills development of the majority of learners whose care staff accompany them from their residences is often impeded; some care staff provide excessive help, answer for learners, and fetch utensils that learners should find for themselves or decide activities for learners that the teacher has not authorised.

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)**19+ learning programmes**

Good

The teaching, learning and assessment in ESOL are good because:

- learners develop effective verbal and written communication skills, which helps them develop good speaking, listening, writing, reading and comprehension skills; these support their personal, social and employment needs well
- learners enjoy well-planned lessons provided by experienced and well-qualified tutors who inspire their learners to apply and practise their comprehension and language skills in a variety of relevant contexts; learners are very keen to learn and there is a harmonious and productive atmosphere in sessions
- learners interact and participate fully in lessons, gaining social, personal and language skills that benefit their personal and social lives and improve their employability, for example in independently making an appointment with a health professional or enquiring about a job vacancy
- tutors provide good individual support for learners in classes which helps learners progress well; tutors are friendly and approachable which means that learners feel comfortable in asking for help during and after sessions
- tutors coach learners very effectively and encourage them to reflect continually on their progress; this motivates learners to continue their learning independently between classes to improve further their skills, for example, through reading a variety of texts such as leaflets and newspaper articles
- tutors assess learners' performance thoroughly and provide them with ongoing, detailed, verbal feedback that celebrates their successes and identifies how they can make improvements; learners appreciate this and are motivated by the frequent and useful feedback
- learners develop their English skills well through a range of interesting learning activities which develop their pronunciation and grammar skills particularly well; they are able to contribute confidently to discussions and debates for example, about current affairs, central government priorities and the local economy
- programmes meet the learners' needs very well; tutors provide very good initial advice and guidance for learners with most learners being on the right course and most are keen to progress to higher levels of study.

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

- a small minority of learners are insufficiently challenged as they are capable of making better progress; regardless of their abilities, in learning sessions all learners follow the same task
- target-setting in a minority of lessons requires improvement, as not all tutors regularly set measurable short-term targets for learners to help them make faster progress towards their overall goal
- tutors do not embed mathematics within learning activities to enable learners to practise these skills, for example when exploring a variety of everyday texts such as loyalty cards,

advertisements with promotional offers and bus timetables; this limits learners in their ability to learn about mathematics in everyday contexts.

Administration

Apprenticeships

Good

The teaching, learning and assessment for apprentices in administration are good because:

- overall success rates for administration apprentices have improved and are now high; the vast majority of apprentices have aspirational employment goals and progress to sustainable employment
- apprentices develop good business administration and employability skills, leading to increased confidence in their abilities, enabling them to obtain promotion during their apprenticeship
- apprentices benefit from a good range of additional training and qualifications provided by employers; this improves their future employment prospects and makes them more versatile; an example of this is apprentices who have taken a high-level qualification in health and safety
- employers in the workplace are highly supportive of apprentices; they value the positive difference apprenticeship learning makes to the businesses, as many of them were previously apprentices themselves; most employers work well with the experienced and knowledgeable assessors to support apprentices
- assessors use their own knowledge and expertise well to motivate apprentices and to assess their knowledge and understanding through effective questioning
- assessors plan learning well to ensure that the individual needs of apprentices are met, specifically linking the on- and off-the-job training; this leads to the development of high-level job skills and good depth of knowledge and understanding by the apprentices
- assessors use highly effective question and answer techniques to test and challenge apprentices' understanding, thus enabling the apprentices to improve further, polish their performance and demonstrate their enhanced knowledge and application of those skills to their jobs
- tutors provide precise verbal feedback that gives clear direction on what apprentices have done well and what they need to do to improve; this allows them to develop independent thinking skills to evaluate their own work
- assessors develop good professional relationships with apprentices and encourage and promote aspirational targets; the majority of apprentices have a good understanding of progress made and participate fully in their learning
- the large majority of apprentices use the online portfolio system that helps apprentices and their employers to ensure that they remain on track to complete their apprenticeship framework in the planned period
- apprentices develop a good understanding of equality and diversity through the effective use of discussion and workplace scenarios; they improve their knowledge further by using e-learning modules.

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

- a few apprentices are still making slow progress; their employers and assessors do not always communicate effectively and tracking of the progress of these apprentices is weak

- a few apprentices with low levels of English and mathematics are not receiving sufficient support to make progress as quickly as they could
- following assessment, not all apprentices receive written feedback; this affects the apprentices' ability to focus on key aspects of what they need to do to improve.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders and managers have a clearly articulated mission and vision for the adult learning service: it is to improve the lives of people of Leicestershire using education as a driver for social mobility and improving life chances. Managers focus strongly on engaging with those residents facing the highest levels of need, disadvantage or deprivation. All staff and managers share this vision and promote high expectations for learners' success and progression into further education or employment.
- Managers conducted a thorough and well-considered re-structure of the provision in 2013. This led to a devolved management and delivery model providing more closely tailored provision to meet the differing needs of the residents in the different localities within Leicestershire. Utilising a wide range of partnerships and delivering from over 130 council and other venues, staff and managers have secured efficiencies at a time of increasing financial and budgetary pressures.
- Overall performance management is good. Managers hold staff to account for the quality of their work and take prompt action to deal with under-performance. The internal moderation of observations is rigorous. Most observers are clearly focused on learning, accurately grade and identify strengths and areas for development. Inspectors agreed with the findings of the observers but judged that managers take a long time to re-observe tutors whose lessons are judged to require improvement and therefore expose learners to mediocre teaching and learning for too long.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are improving through a range of activities including graded peer observations and walk-through observations supported by good continuous professional development. Tutors benefit from the wide range of training and coaching to improve their teaching skills.
- Managers have improved the management of curriculum areas by combining some of them such as employability and ICT, and modern foreign languages and ESOL. They have appointed well qualified and experienced learning and development coordinators to support large numbers of part-time tutors. Learning and development coordinators improve tutors' skills well by team-teaching, sharing best practice and by identifying more engaging learning resources. As a result teaching in modern foreign languages and other subject areas have improved to good levels.
- As already recognised by the head of service, governance arrangements require improvement. Governance has a clear reporting structure, with frequent reporting, through senior leadership to the nominated elected member. However, the focus of such reports is solely on high-level outcomes and not on other important aspects such as the outcomes for learners and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Senior managers are currently considering alternative arrangements to improve the rigour and breadth of the support and challenge provided through governance.
- Following a sharp decline in apprenticeship success rates in 2012/13, leaders took decisive action to deal with the issues. They recruited new managers and staff and implemented a comprehensive development plan to bring about rapid improvements to the key processes. As a result, success rates for 2013/14 show marked improvement, although they are still low on a minority of apprenticeships. In-year data indicate further improvement. Managers collect and analyse a good range of management information thoroughly to inform the self-assessment process and performance management. However, they do not collect and use data on

progression and destinations of learners systematically across all provision to improve further planning of the provision.

- Self-assessment is a very inclusive process. All managers and staff contribute to the self-assessment report and know their provision well. Scrutiny of the self-assessment report is thorough, including external peer review and involvement of the departmental lead for equalities. The report is accurate and reflects the findings of the inspection team. However, it is a very long document with too much description of processes, rather than judgements on their impact on learners. The quality improvement plans have challenging success criteria and clear timescales for the completion of actions.
- Senior managers have strong representation on the Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) which is developing the local skills agenda. The LLEP provides regular briefings to managers about emerging skills needs and gaps. Staff take prompt action to participate in programmes to support job seekers such as jobs fairs and work clubs.
- LALS is a very inclusive service promoting equality of access and support with a strong ethos of mutual respect between staff and learners. Dignity at work, including zero-tolerance of harassment, bullying and victimisation or unacceptable behaviour is a strong feature of learning programmes. Tutors and other staff receive good training to equip them with the knowledge and skills to meet the specific needs of learners and to provide a high level of support to help them overcome their barriers to learning.
- Managers investigate the very few complaints thoroughly. They use the outcomes of these as learning points to instigate reviews and improvements to procedures and processes or to develop additional staff training such as, for example, unconscious bias training.
- Equality is at the forefront of the county council priorities. Managers reflect this well by undertaking a detailed equalities impact assessment of any proposed service changes or initiatives with the departmental equalities group. This high-level steer means that tutors have greater confidence to promote diversity in lessons. Managers make very good use of demographic data to inform programme planning. Other positive changes include the introduction of a low-income fund to support low-paid learners who are not eligible for fee remission and increased participation of learners from targeted groups.
- Safeguarding arrangements for learners are good. Managers adopt safer recruitment practices and conduct appropriate checks on new staff, including those from the Disclosure and Barring Service. Learners are safe and are confident in how, and to whom, they would report any concerns. Tutors use a wide range of materials to develop learners' understanding of e-safety and customise materials to meet the specific needs of different learner groups. For example, family learning has a good learning package to support parental understanding of how to keep themselves and their children safe when using the internet and social media.
- Managers have made available a wide range of resources through the virtual learning environment to support staff and learners' understanding of the Prevent and radicalisation agenda, including a particularly informative myth-busting section, and how to report concerns. Managers have plans to offer specific training through e-learning during the summer of 2015.
- Staff and managers follow thorough processes for managing health and safety. Learners are safe and feel safe in a variety of learning venues.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Leicestershire County Council

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	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2				1	2	2	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2				2	2	2	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2				2	2	2	2	2

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

Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority							
Age range of learners	19+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	5,441							
Principal/CEO	Mr Nigel Thomas							
Date of previous inspection	12 October 2012							
Website address	www.leics.gov.uk/golearn							
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+
	15	1,448	11	572	0	45	0	0
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	37	52	14	91	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	24		9		33			
Number of learners aged 14-16	None							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	2,775							
Number of employability learners	39							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None 							

Contextual information

Leicestershire Adult Learning Service of Leicestershire County Council serves the rural areas around Leicester and operates throughout the county delivering learning from 130 venues including libraries, schools, children's centres, museums and other community venues. It has 12 main sites based in Loughborough, Melton Mowbray, Thurmaston, Market Harborough, Enderby, Wigston Magna, Hinckley, Countesthorpe and Coalville. Some 180 part-time and full-time staff teach from venues in the local towns. The population is predominantly White British but is becoming more ethnically diverse; there is a significant Asian/Asian British community. In recent years, the citizens of the Eastern European countries have arrived in the county, broadening the ethnic mix of the population. Leicestershire has one of the lowest rates of unemployed people in the region and the country.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Harmesh Manghra HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Funding, Standards and Quality Improvement 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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