

# Medway Council

## Local authority

<b>Inspection dates</b>		23–26 June 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-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 high success rates on nearly all courses; many learners benefit significantly from their learning, and progress into further education or employment
- learners develop a good range of skills that allow them to make good progress, enhance their employability, and increase their well-being and involvement in their communities; many learners develop useful skills by undertaking extra revision and research work outside classes
- standards of learners' work are high; written work is often highly reflective and demonstrates good subject engagement, whilst in craft and other practical courses, learners produce high-quality artefacts
- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good; tutors ensure that classes are interesting and involving, with a good range of varied and challenging activities that extend and develop learners' knowledge and skills
- learners receive good support, reflecting the service's strong focus on removing barriers to learning for those in most disadvantaged communities; learners in these communities improve their personal well-being, receive good support to adopt healthier lifestyles and improve their employment prospects
- significant and secure improvements have been made since the previous inspection, and managers have implemented effective plans to improve the quality of teaching and learning; self-assessment is comprehensive and accurate, with good consultation among staff and learners.

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

- success rates in the small number of foundation mathematics courses are below the national rate for similar providers
- too often, spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors remain uncorrected in learners' written work
- a minority of learners lack clear, meaningful and achievable targets in personal learning plans that will challenge them to improve their work and skills further.

## Full report

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

- Ensure that all tutors make good use of initial assessment information and individual learning plans to develop and record meaningful, skills-based personal targets that drive progress and help learners understand the steps they need to take to improve.
- Improve the frequency with which tutors in all subjects correct spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in learners' written work, and provide staff development to enhance tutors' confidence in correction of such errors.
- Build on tutors' enthusiasm for improvement through staff development activities that focus on pedagogical approaches and teaching and learning methods. Help tutors to maintain good and better teaching and learning, and move towards outstanding practice, by identifying excellence in pedagogy and sharing this widely.
- Improve success rates on accredited foundation mathematics courses so that they are at least in line with the national rate for similar providers.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- Outcomes for learners across Medway Adult Community Learning Service (MACLS) are good. The service has approximately 3,700 learners on classroom-based courses annually, with around two thirds of learners on non-accredited community learning programmes and the remainder on courses funded by the adult skills budget. At the time of inspection, there were 36 apprentices on programme, most employed by Medway Council. Around a quarter of learners are on workskills and employability courses.
- In 2013/14, and during the current year, the proportion of learners successfully achieving their qualification was good. Success rates on most courses leading to qualifications are at or above the national rate for similar provision; in a minority of cases success rates are significantly above national rates. Qualification success rates in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) were in decline at the time of the previous inspection, but are now above national rates, and significantly so for entry level and level 2 courses.
- Success rates for the small number of foundation mathematics courses require improvement overall. For courses at level 1 in 2013/14, outcomes were significantly below national rates. At level 2, high success rates during 2012/13 and 2013/14 have declined during 2014/15 to be below the national rate for similar providers. Courses at entry level were significantly above the national rate for similar providers in 2013/14, but declined to be just above the national rate during 2014/15.
- Progression opportunities for learners are clearly and widely promoted and publicised, a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Learners now receive good information, advice or guidance on progression routes within and beyond MACLS. Such improved advice and guidance result in greater numbers of learners progressing to further study, to voluntary work or to employment.
- Attendance during the past year has been high, and at the time of inspection was good across all centres and subjects. Learners arrive for lessons punctually and are eager to take part in activities. Many learners on non-accredited leisure courses undertake revision, homework and other tasks between lessons.

- Retention is good across the provision, and in around a quarter of provision is outstanding. Family learning and employability courses have very high retention compared to similar courses nationally.
- Managers have dealt successfully with recommendations from the previous inspection to reduce the number of learners on non-accredited courses enrolling on the same course each year. Many courses identified with repeated enrolments are now self-financing groups. Managers were successful in ensuring that the transition from funded to non-funded status was smooth for learners in these groups.
- Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support from tutors and other staff, and as a result make good progress, achieve well and increase their independence and confidence. Outcomes on courses that lead to examinations, and on non-examined courses, are good for these learners.
- Learners on many courses often join with low levels of self-esteem, poor prior attainment and success, and low aspirations. While with MACLS they gain valuable parenting, social, employment, communications and other skills, and often progress through levels and on to further study or employment.
- Standards of learners’ work are high. In practical craft classes, for example, learners produce attractive and and/or useful artefacts that demonstrate good levels of skill and understanding. Many learners develop high levels of confidence in design, manipulation of materials, and in production processes. Staff and managers ensure that centres are rich in displays of learners’ work. In language and theoretical classes, learners demonstrate good levels of reflectiveness, and in the majority of classes learners support one another very well.
- Managers have excellent access to comprehensive, accurate and timely data on learners’ performance. Managers and tutors are well informed about the relative progress of different groups of learners, monitor any variations, and have clear procedures for prompt action to deal with performance gaps. As a result, no significant variations exist in the outcomes for different groups of learners.

<b>The quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	Good
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- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, reflecting the high, and improving, proportion of learners who successfully complete their courses. The subject areas of community learning and foundation English reported on represent a sample of the most significant provision at the time of inspection.
- Learners receive good support, reflecting the service’s strong focus on removing barriers to learning. Learners study at an appropriate level and pace, and are challenged well by their tutors who have high expectations of them. Learners talk positively about their skills development and how courses improve their personal well-being, help them to adopt healthy lifestyles and prevent them becoming isolated.
- Mathematics and English learners become more confident, make greater use of their skills in these subjects in their day-to-day lives and are supported well in their career progression. For example, one young lone parent hopes to achieve her English level 2 functional skills qualification so that she can study nursing in the autumn.
- Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enjoy their learning. They concentrate well and develop their fine motor skills in well-structured lessons that engage and motivate them. Many learners design and make useful and attractive items that they look forward to putting into their gardens or homes. However, too often in such lessons, learners’ carers and support workers take on too much of the activity themselves and slow learners’ skills development.
- Tutors encourage independent learning very successfully. The majority of learners make good use of the service’s virtual learning environment (VLE), within which they find handouts from sessions they may have missed or constructive exercises to extend their learning. By using the

VLE, learners can review their own progress and revise topics they may feel less confident about. On a number of courses, learners also communicate with one another about their work between classes. Tutors provide useful areas for communication about subject areas and for celebration of learners' achievements. For example, arts and crafts learners have the opportunity to celebrate their learning and success by saving their work in the student work gallery.

- Enthusiastic tutors use their expertise well to skilfully weave mathematics skills into sessions. For example, in a level 2 retail knowledge course, learners practised using a till and calculating and giving the correct change quickly. Learners in art classes learn fractions and ratios by manipulating grids to shrink or enlarge pictures, and learners on a level 2 certificate in fitness instructing and self-development course are taught to calculate accurately learners' and clients' body mass indices.
- Measures to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are effective in developing tutors' skills and understanding. Observation reports contain good levels of detail about the progress made by learners, and about the areas for improvement for each tutor. However, the majority of reports lack clear descriptions of the learning activities undertaken, which would help the service to share best practice and the tutors to understand clearly their areas for development.
- Leaders and managers connect with disadvantaged communities well by targeting provision in areas of greatest deprivation and/or need. Managers are responsive to local and regional skills and economic needs, designing the annual curriculum offer from a skills needs analysis created in partnership with local community groups. Courses offer a good selection of learning opportunities to help learners at home and with their families, such as cooking on a budget, financial literacy, Made of Money and first aid, as well as courses that develop employability skills, such as information technology and health and safety. Around one third of learners on accredited courses move into employment within four months of finishing their course.
- Most tutors use well designed individual learning plans to check whether the learner would benefit from English, mathematics or employability skills support. However, the progress that learners make in their courses is not always recorded in sufficient detail to help the learners understand which skills they need to develop. Support for dyslexic learners is given through a productive working relationship with Mid-Kent College.
- Teachers do not always correct spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in learners' work, so that a minority of learners repeat errors and are less likely to achieve well in their examinations or to make best use of their course to improve their skills.
- Many tutors give excellent progression advice and use their subject specialist knowledge well to encourage and support their learners to improve their employment prospects. For example, a windscreen fitter joined a level 2 qualification in gym instruction, completed his preparing to teach in the lifelong sector tutoring qualification, and is studying the level 3 qualification in personal training having become a self-employed boxing gym teacher and a personal trainer.
- Learners progress within their studies and the vast majority of learners on level 2 courses move on to advanced level 3 qualifications. New learners enrolling onto English and mathematics courses have progression charts that explain how their studies could lead on to other programmes. As part of their courses, learners research progression options and receive comprehensive information packs which give them details of local higher education providers and career options.
- Tutors promote equality and diversity well; they carefully tackle inaccurate cultural assumptions through sensitive questioning of learners on the rare occasions when inappropriate or insensitive comments are made.

**Community Learning**

Good

**Community learning****Teaching, learning and assessment in community learning are good because:**

- most learners succeed on their courses, gaining good skills that prepare them well for further study and/or enhance their health and well-being; for example, older learners in yoga classes benefit from improved fitness and flexibility of movement, as well as reducing their feelings of social isolation
- learners on information and communication technology courses recognise the need to improve their skills if they are going to be able to improve their job prospects and gain employment; with good support from their tutors, they make swift progress and gain valuable employment skills
- learners on non-accredited practical courses produce work of a high standard, such as those studying clothes making who are proud of being able to make and wear garments which are unique and fit much better than similar items available commercially; one unemployed learner is intending to set up her own business by using her skills to make and sell children's clothing
- tutors are approachable and supportive, and passionate about their subjects, encouraging learners of different abilities to work well together in an atmosphere of trust and mutual support; learners on family budgeting courses grow in confidence and feel able to share experiences and talk openly about the ways they overcome financial difficulties and debt
- tutors use the service's high quality learning resources particularly well to sustain learners' interest and concentration; through the creative use of interactive whiteboards, learners studying French were able to develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills particularly well
- tutors in the majority of sessions have high expectations of their learners, setting them homework to help reinforce learning, as well developing independent research and computer skills; for example, learners in a sewing class were asked to research the history of corset making and, in family learning classes, tutors provide parents with simple recipes they can make at home with their children to encourage healthier eating
- tutors provide frequent, constructive oral feedback that shows learners how to improve their work; in stained glass classes, for example, following clear and constructive tutor comments, learners were able to refine their techniques so they could shape lead correctly
- tutors plan effectively to develop English and mathematics skills through subject learning; parents in family learning cookery lessons are reminded of the importance of accurate counting and measuring, and of the need to talk to their children to develop their child's vocabulary and understanding of number
- learners benefit from clear and accessible information, advice and guidance which help them make sensible decisions about courses of interest, relevant to their aspirations and their life style; clear progression opportunities are available and well signposted for learners, both within MACLS and through links with other local providers
- tutors promote equality and diversity well in lessons through the topics they choose and the materials they use; in history classes, for example, tutors encourage learners to discuss differing religious and cultural interpretations of events with sensitivity, and, in garment making, learners were asked to research traditional Japanese clothing as part of their work on sleeve design.

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

- in a minority of cases, tutors do not use the results of initial assessment well enough to set and record realistic and individualised targets for every learner

- tutors do not always monitor or record the development of learners' skills and knowledge well enough to ensure each learner is being sufficiently challenged and their understanding extended in every class.

<b>Foundation English</b>	Good
<b>Community learning</b>	
<b>19+ learning programmes</b>	

**Teaching, learning and assessment in foundation English are good because:**

- outcomes for learners on foundation English and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses are high, and for the vast majority of courses last year were above national rates for similar provision; foundation English success rates for the current year are, for the vast majority, above national rates, and in-year ESOL outcomes are slightly below national rates for shorter courses, but significantly above for longer courses on which the majority of learners are enrolled
- tutors develop learners' interpersonal and independent learning skills in the majority of lessons and successfully encourage learners to work together to develop their communication skills and self-confidence
- tutors plan lessons well to include a good range of topics that develop good language skills and have relevance to learners' lives and interests; for example, subjects for discussion in speaking and listening groups included playing online games, entering competitions, helping children with learning, healthy living and religious festivals
- with good support from their tutors, learners take responsibility for their own learning, for example by presenting ideas on how to advise a lottery winner and by drawing up thoughtful questions to a speaker who told the group about her visit to India to work with disadvantaged learners
- in the majority of lessons tutors include a good balance of activities that are well planned to engage all learners, meet individual needs and abilities, and promote individual progress; such activities included listing the features of a magazine for higher level learners and a reader for lower levels, or writing a letter for higher levels and an email for lower levels
- tutors use a broad range of authentic materials such as YouTube clips and other online sources that clearly meet the differing needs of the learners and increase awareness of British culture in English lessons; for example, learners were able to source materials independently to produce a poster advertising Rochester, and to practise using persuasive language to prepare for their speaking examination; whilst in other sessions, tutors used videos about Ramadan to stimulate discussion and develop listening, speaking and writing skills
- tutors are adept at managing classes so that learners feel comfortable, relaxed and able to participate fully; for example, tutors make use of directed questions to draw out individual responses, set up pair and group work to give less confident learners chance to contribute in a less daunting setting, and use peer evaluation and correction well to allow learners to see what they and their peers need to improve
- additional learning support is effective and enables learners with disabilities and learning difficulties to participate fully, for example helping learners with spelling and pronunciation so that they can communicate with greater clarity and more confidence
- tutors promote equality and diversity particularly well during classes; for example, in one class, a tutor made reference to Ramadan and other religious beliefs, with links to the food prepared during festivals, whilst other groups discussed giving money to charities after winning the lottery, and a visit to India to help disadvantaged children.

**Teaching, learning and assessment in Foundation English are not outstanding because:**

- personal learning goals in individual learning plans are not always sufficiently challenging, clear or measurable, and do not always provide learners with a clear understanding of what steps they must take to progress
- in a minority of sessions, where English is not learners' first language, there was insufficient development of language skills to enable learners to communicate successfully and to prepare for examinations; tutors do not always develop learners' ability to speak in meaningful sentences.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the leaders and managers have made significant and secure improvements to many aspects of the service. Coherent and carefully aligned priorities link well to the council's overall ambition to meet the needs of a diverse local community. The MACLS strategic plan focuses effectively on improving outcomes for learners, responding to local and wider needs, and on promoting employment. Standards of teaching, learning and assessment have improved and are now good, and overall success rates for learners are high. Senior managers have established a culture of high expectations linked to the continuous monitoring of progress against challenging service targets.
- Council members receive frequent updates on the service's progress. The elected member with particular responsibility for provision is a strong advocate of, and actively involved with, the service. Additional funding has been secured that allows managers to maintain and improve provision during a time of fiscal constraint. Partnership arrangements are good. An extensive range of partners is instrumental in securing improvements and developing new and bespoke programmes. The chief executive of the council and a senior manager have good links with the local further education college, bringing about an advantageous sharing of resources, ideas and improved curriculum planning.
- Managers have implemented effective plans to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Performance management arrangements are now raising quality across the service and the few less effective teachers are supported well in improving their teaching craft. Managers accurately judge the standards of teaching and learning as good. However, observers focus too much on the skills of the teachers rather than the impact of learning on individual progress in sessions.
- Self-assessment is comprehensive and accurate. Staff, learner and partner views are actively sought and used well to inform managers of further ways to improve. Managers have a clear and up-to-date operational understanding of the service's strengths and areas for improvement. Managers monitor quality improvement plans continuously and effectively. The elected portfolio holder for the service and the responsible assistant director of the council undertake reviews of the standards of teaching and learning to gather a more detailed understanding of the learner experience, for example by carrying out learning walks and by observing lessons and reporting back their findings to service managers.
- Managers now have a sound track record of improvement and key recommendations from the previous inspection have, in the main, been dealt with. The use and analysis of data are particularly effective and inform managers of learner progress to date in a timely and systematic way. Overall, quality assurance arrangements by curriculum managers are good; although, in a few cases, less effective practice has not yet been sufficiently eradicated, such as in the wholesale implementation of individual learning plans and the setting of challenging individual targets.
- Curriculum management is good. Managers ensure that programme and course content reflect the ever-changing needs of the diverse requirements of partner and learner needs. Courses are run in a wide range of venues. The introduction of the virtual care academy has been a positive step forward in developing specific training and employment pathways for learners, and this is

shortly to be followed by academies in retail and leisure. Managers recognise that they are not always quick enough at responding to previously unexpected need and introducing courses mid-year.

- Many learners benefit from the training and progress into further education or employment. However, arrangements between the service and the communication of timely and accurate information to learners require improvement, for example in ensuring accurate enrolment dates and the planning for a learner's next step. Provision for learners from deprived areas accounts for a significant minority of the total provision; but, whilst a key improvement target, the proportion of this work has not increased over the past two years.
- The management of equality and diversity is good and underpins the corporation's ethos of inclusion. Managers and staff actively and effectively promote a learning environment that is harmonious and calm. They monitor achievement and performance of minority ethnic groups frequently to identify and deal with any emerging negative trends. A learner forum is productive in raising awareness of equality and diversity topics, and teachers use their knowledge well to extend learner understanding. The celebration of learner achievement is good.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good and meet statutory requirements. A fully trained designated member of staff maintains comprehensive safeguarding records. Support for those learners at risk is good and enables many to continue in their studies. Staff have been appropriately trained in safeguarding and all managers and many staff have completed training on how to recognise radicalisation and extremism. Learners know how to use the internet safely. Senior council officers receive frequent updates about any safeguarding concerns, but arrangements to formally inform elected members of safeguarding arrangements are not sufficiently well established.



## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Medway Council

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

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Foundation English</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>	3,688							
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Neil Davies							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	March 2014							
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.medway.gov.uk/schoolsandeducation/adultlearning.aspx">http://www.medway.gov.uk/schoolsandeducation/adultlearning.aspx</a>							
<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+
	-	470	-	138	-	46	-	4
<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+		
	5	8	5	10	-	-		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>								
<b>Full-time</b>	N/A							
<b>Part-time</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	758							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	19							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Winfield Trust</li> </ul>							

## Contextual information

Medway Adult and Community Learning Service serves the needs of Medway including Strood, Rainham, Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham. The population of Medway is predominantly of White British background, but with an increasing proportion of the community from minority ethnic groups, currently at around 10%. Average earnings of residents are below the average for the region. Medway ranks within the 41% of most deprived boroughs nationally according to the index of deprivation 2010. Just under a quarter of the adult population of Medway has no qualifications, higher than the average for the South East of England; however, a higher proportion of adults than nationally holds intermediate and advanced qualifications.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Richard Beynon HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), and three additional inspectors, assisted by the head of curriculum and partnerships 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 past 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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012)

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