

Middlesbrough Council

Local Authority

Inspection dates 26–29 January 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for learners	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Through strong partnership, effective collaboration and a well-structured review of local and regional priorities, Middlesbrough Council have constructed a flexible curriculum that meets the needs and interests of local communities and individuals extremely well.
- Quality assurance and self-assessment procedures are robust. Managers have improved teaching, learning and assessment because they make accurate judgements about the quality of learning.
- The policies and procedures for safeguarding are robust. They have appropriate checks for staff recruitment, including those of partners.
- The success rates for apprentices are good.
- The success rates for the non-accredited community learning programmes are excellent.
- Tutors demonstrate high but realistic expectations of learners and use these well to enable most learners to improve their life chances and/or their employability prospects.
- Teachers communicate subject skills and knowledge very effectively to learners who respond well, complete work enthusiastically and make good progress.
- Learners' work is good and shows a high level of individual application both in the classroom and in their independent work.
- Learners and staff speak confidently about, and provide good examples of how to protect themselves from, the risks of extremism and radicalisation in all its forms.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- The success rates on accredited provision, although having improved last year, are still not good enough.
- Although the majority of teaching and learning is at least good, some still needs to improve further.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Middlesbrough Council, known locally as Middlesbrough Community Learning (MCL), targets its provision at the hardest to reach communities in Middlesbrough. More than 80% of the learners they have engaged with this year have no formal previous qualifications.
- Unemployment in Middlesbrough is almost double the figure for the whole of Great Britain. It ranks highly in nearly all indices of deprivation and has the highest ratio of asylum seekers to general population in England. Many of these are granted 'leave to remain' quickly and then become job seekers. Jobcentre Plus then mandate a significant number of these to attend training programmes. A large proportion require English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) training and MCL is now the primary provider in Middlesbrough delivering this training. Many of these learners are frequently transient and do not stay in Middlesbrough to complete their training.
- The number of learners achieving five or more GCSEs at A* to C including English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 in Middlesbrough is 8% below the figure for England as a whole.
- MCL also deliver study programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds, many of whom have significant and multiple barriers to learning as well as a poor previous education experience.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of the weaker teaching so that all learners across all aspects of the provision enjoy an excellent experience.
- Improve the retention and success rates for adults undertaking accredited qualifications.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- MCL senior managers and staff communicate a powerful ethos of community improvement through learning. It permeates everything they do, and because of this they encourage Middlesbrough residents to see learning as central to improving their lives and to 'be part of it'. There is a vibrancy evident in partnership management meetings that emphasises their commitment and zest for improving people's lives. Consequently, aspirations and expectations for all learners, regardless of their background or their previous achievements, are high.
- Leaders and managers have responded very well to the issues identified in the previous inspection, restructuring the service and putting improved teaching, learning and assessment at the heart of further improvement. Through strong partnership, effective collaboration and a well-structured review of local and regional labour-market priorities, MCL leaders and partners have constructed a flexible curriculum that meets the needs and interests of local communities and individuals extremely well. They also have well-developed plans for future growth to sustain and extend the reach of the service.
- By creating a culture of self-development through well-targeted funding for short courses, many more learners participate in learning and become more independent and self-reliant. This culture has encouraged local people to set up clubs and community ventures that promote healthy living, better mental health and counter loneliness, for example through developing luncheon clubs.
- Managers ensure that all learning programmes, no matter how short, enable learners to begin to develop their English and mathematics skills. On longer courses, their unremitting focus on the skills that learners need to gain employment has led to high success rates in English and mathematics, alongside very good ICT skills. They acknowledge that a small minority of learners, particularly those working at level 1, require further intervention to ensure that they succeed as well as other learners.
- Senior leadership and managers know MCL's strengths and weaknesses. They know what the service needs to do to improve the education and teaching experience that learners get, for example by taking direct action to improve the behaviour and achievement of learners on study programmes. They are enthusiastic advocates about the impact that learning and achievement have on disadvantaged learners, and have strong support and challenge strategies to ensure that learners succeed.
- Quality assurance and self-assessment procedures are robust. Managers have improved teaching, learning and assessment because they make accurate judgements about the quality of learning. They monitor data well, and tutors and partners benefit from enthusiastic and carefully targeted support to assure the quality of what they do and to help them improve when required. This means that most learners benefit from high-quality teaching, learning and assessment and make confident steps towards employment or further study.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Council leaders, the executive member for education and skills, and the community advisory group provide effective and strategic direction for MCL. Their clarity about the purpose of the service means that they support and challenge managers and staff to meet local priorities for community improvement and regeneration well. They have a clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. They know what managers need to do to address the weaknesses and build on the strengths.
 - They have worked with managers to secure a very well thought-out vision for future expansion, using council and Local Enterprise Partnership priorities. The current partnerships enable MCL to use their expertise to best effect for the benefit of communities in Middlesbrough.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - There are robust policies and procedures for safeguarding. They have appropriate checks for staff recruitment, including those of partners. Staff take part in regular training and updating. MCL shares their good training resources in safeguarding and equality and diversity with other providers.
 - Learners and apprentices feel safe; they know whom to contact if they have a concern and use appropriate health and safety procedures when in the workplace. They understand how to keep themselves safe, physically and online.
 - Managers have worked very closely with the local police force to develop and secure effective policies in response to the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty. They have trained staff well; learners and staff speak confidently about, and provide good examples of, how to protect themselves from the risks of extremism and radicalisation in all their forms.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Most tutors demonstrate high, though realistic, expectations of learners and use these well to enable most learners to achieve their learning goals. In a session about value added tax, apprentices made good progress in understanding how it is calculated and in identifying the goods and services to which it applies.
- Tutors have good subject knowledge and most use this well to plan learning that meets individual needs. They use teaching and learning activities effectively to motivate learners so that most of them make the progress they should. In a few sessions, tutors do not take sufficient account of learners who are less able or who work less quickly than others do. As a result, learning activities are too challenging for a very small minority of learners.
- Tutors use the outcomes of initial assessment to identify learners' additional support needs promptly and accurately. As a result, effective support is in place for all learners who need extra help. These learners succeed better than learners who do not receive additional support.
- Tutors assess learners' and apprentices' work frequently and accurately. Learners and apprentices benefit from regular progress reviews so that they know what they have achieved and what they still need to do to complete their course. Tutors involve apprentices' employers in their progress reviews so that they are well informed about how well their apprentice is progressing and the tasks they need to complete in the workplace to achieve their qualifications.
- The majority of learners benefit from written feedback that identifies what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. In a minority of cases, written feedback is not sufficiently detailed or it does not identify spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. As a result, a minority of learners are not sufficiently aware of the specific improvements they need to make to their work.
- The large majority of tutors promote equality and diversity well. In a mathematics session for 16- to 19-year-olds on study programmes, the tutor used a timeline going back to the year of the holocaust to enable learners to add and subtract larger numbers. Learners discussed prejudice and discrimination, showing good understanding of why it is not acceptable to discriminate against others because of their religion or different cultural background.
- Most learners benefit from good opportunities to develop their English and mathematics skills in sessions. Teachers successfully integrate English and mathematics into other subjects, for example by making sure that learners can spell key terminology accurately in a mathematics session and by using a grading scheme for an information technology course to reinforce learners' skills in addition and calculating percentages.
- A small number of tutors do not always check that all learners have understood key learning points before moving on to the next activity. Consequently, a few learners fall behind. In a small number of cases, when using questioning, tutors do not use them well enough to encourage the learners who are more able to develop their ideas further.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

- Nearly two thirds of the learners at MCL participate in non-accredited classes designed to improve their personal development. The success rates on these courses are excellent. Many learners experience a 'life-changing' impact. All learners and apprentices demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and take immense pride in their achievements. For example, retired adult learners on an IT course explained proudly that they could now use a computer to search effectively for information on the internet.
- Tutors provide learners with good information, advice and guidance. During an interview for a course to prepare learners for an apprenticeship programme, the tutor provided clear information about different modules the learner could choose on the course, such as communication skills or health and safety, and about current, local job opportunities. Consequently, learners develop their confidence and their awareness of what they need to do to improve their chances of getting a job or volunteering.
- Learners and apprentices develop a wide range of useful skills that they can apply in everyday life or in the workplace. Learners on 16–19 study programmes learn how to interpret timetables so that they can use public transport effectively. Apprentices improve their ability to receive and deal with telephone calls from customers who are not satisfied.
- Attendance is high across the provision. The large majority of learners and apprentices attend their sessions regularly and most attend promptly. When learners and apprentices are absent from sessions, tutors contact them promptly to establish the reason and to encourage them to return to their course.
- Tutors have high expectations for behaviour and conduct. Learners and apprentices follow the provider's

guidelines very well. They arrive at sessions prepared for learning and their behaviour within and outside of sessions is good.

- The large majority of learners and apprentices show that they are aware of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. During course inductions, tutors advise learners how to protect themselves from radicalisation, extremism and grooming, including when using the internet. Learners on a fitness course now take exercise more regularly, eat more healthily and take more responsibility for improving their general health. As a result, they are more active and are no longer overweight.
- Learners and apprentices demonstrate respect for people's individual differences. During discussion, they listen to other people's views, and the large minority show that they are able to talk confidently, respectfully and appropriately about marriage between people of the same sex, and about people's different cultural practices and religious beliefs.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- A large majority of learners at MCL make good progress relative to their starting point and increasing numbers exceed their own and predicted expectations. For the largest group of learners who attend non-accredited provision, the success rates are excellent. They develop and improve a wide range of personal skills that result in improvements in personal confidence, self-esteem and overcome social exclusion and loneliness. A significant number of programmes successfully improve both the physical and mental health for many learners.
- For approximately one third of the learners who attend accredited provision, success rates declined in 2013–14, but using the provider's data recovered slightly in 2014–15 to be around the last published national figure. The success rates for the ESOL provision, the largest group of learners, were affected by low retention rates for transient migrant workers and asylum seekers.
- Success rates for the smaller number of apprentices are good and are well above the last published national levels. Current apprentices are making good progress and are on target to achieve within their planned time. Success rates for the small provision for 16- to 19-year-old study programmes have improved following significant management intervention but still need further improvement.
- MCL achieve good success rates on nearly all functional skills mathematics and English. A small number of adults undertook GCSEs in English and mathematics and pass rates are high, with a large majority of those achieving a high grade between A* and C.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes

are good

- Adult learners study full-time and part-time across all subject areas. Nearly two thirds of the learners participate in non-accredited community learning and around one third are following an accredited programme. The vast majority of learners are job seekers and many are recent migrants to Britain. Courses include English language skills, computing and personal skills such as confidence building and individual self-esteem development. For example, in a beginners computing course for parents, learners were also building a curriculum vitae and practising their written and spoken English. Learners are able to participate better in their communities, families and modern Britain.
- Managers work closely with community groups, Jobcentre Plus and schools to ensure that adult learners follow programmes that meet their needs. For example, MCL provides English language skills in primary schools to support parents from a wide range of cultures.
- Learners receive very helpful information, advice and guidance and can make informed choices about choosing the right programme to meet their initial training needs and then to take their next steps. Adult learners understand how to protect themselves from potential dangers of radicalisation and extremism well.
- Learners respond eagerly to the high standards and expectations set by their tutors. Learners follow directions well, work productively and take pride in their achievements. Learners are courteous, considerate and respectful of their peers and tutors. Learners' attendance and punctuality are very good.
- Learners enjoy the many ways in which teachers help them learn, for example simulating a restaurant environment in an ESOL class. Learners benefit from group work with diverse people and independent study set by tutors. Learners' make rapid progress in their lessons, linking theory to practice well. For example learners on confidence building courses are now able to recognise and adapt their behaviour in social settings. There is, however, still variation in the quality of teaching and the learning experienced by

some learners.

- Tutors and learners are able to agree clear targets and learning goals and they review the achievement of these regularly. In the majority of sessions, teachers assess learners' progress effectively using tests and presentations. For example, learners on employability courses give each other helpful advice on how to add further detail to curriculum vitae and covering letters. A small minority of tutors fail to check learners understanding following activities and sessions thoroughly.

Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	5,104
Principal/CEO	Chris Kemp
Website address	www.mcls.ac.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	12	1,555	13	92	0	26	0	3
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	35	20	17	24				
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14–16	0							
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 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Tim Gardner, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christopher Jones	Her Majesty's Inspector
Brenda Clayton	Ofsted Inspector
Steven Sharpe	Ofsted Inspector
Stella Owen	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the head of service, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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