

Learning Matters

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

13–15 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Trustees and senior leaders do not monitor the quality of the provision sufficiently.
- Attendance is unacceptably low; too few learners attend the English and mathematics elements of their study programmes.
- Written feedback which learners receive does not clearly identify what they need to do to improve their performance.
- Information about learners' starting points and prior attainment is not used effectively to plan learning and set appropriate targets for individuals.
- Not all aspects of the study programme have been implemented in a timely way; the gaining of skills for future employment has been slow for a small minority of learners.
- Too few learners completed their vocational, English and mathematics qualifications in 2014/15.

The provider has the following strengths

- Learners benefit from good support and care that enable them to build their confidence levels and overcome barriers to learning.
- Learners gain good vocational skills in musicianship and creative media, with resourceful and professional tutors providing good individual attention to learners.
- Tutors include English and mathematical skills well in vocational lessons.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Learning Matters is a project and part of the national charitable organisation Volunteering Matters. It is based in and operates from offices in central Ipswich and delivers study programmes for non-English speaking young people and for learners with high needs. It offers qualifications in music performance, creative media, information technology and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The proportion of young people who achieve A* to C in English and mathematics on leaving school in Ipswich is below the all-schools average for England and unemployment is slightly higher than the national rate.
- A total of 47 learners are currently studying with Learning Matters, the large majority with ESOL as their main qualification and the remainder, learners with high needs, are funded via the local authority on various vocational qualifications in musicianship, information technology and creative media courses from foundation level to level 3.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure trustees and senior leaders are better informed of the progress learners make and about the performance and quality of the provision by requesting and scrutinising performance reports, which will enable them to challenge managers and staff more effectively.
- Improve learners' attendance by creating and implementing a more robust attendance policy and by encouraging higher expectations that motivate learners in the development of their work-related skills, particularly in respect of their time keeping and attendance.
- Improve the level and standard of written feedback learners receive so that they are clear on how they can improve their performance and standard of work.
- Ensure that tutors utilise the information gathered about individual learners' starting points and prior attainment in the planning of their learning sessions and the setting of short- and long-term targets so that the progress learners make is more rapid.
- Ensure that all aspects of the study programmes are met by increasing the number of work experience places and work-related activities learners have access to and ensuring that learners attend their English and mathematics classes and complete their qualifications.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Trustees and senior leaders do not invite or receive sufficient detailed information on the performance of learners or on the quality of the provision. This lack of detailed performance information prevents them from challenging managers and staff sufficiently.
- Managers responsible for the provision are taking effective action to secure improvements. They review the quality of provision on a regular basis, through the use of mainly accurate self-assessment processes and quality improvement plans. Managers monitor the performance of learners well but do not review the success of actions they take to tackle weaknesses. Managers do not keep records of improvement actions up to date.
- Managers use data well to monitor the achievements of learners and to review attendance and retention. While provider data indicate retention is improving significantly, the targets and expectations regarding learners' attendance are too low.
- Managers give a high priority to the development of learners' English and mathematical skills. The core aim of study programmes are based on learners gaining ESOL qualifications and learners benefit from the good inclusion of mathematical skills into their vocational lessons.
- Tutors are well qualified and have good occupational experience, for example in music and creative media. However, the actions from observations of teaching, learning and assessment do not focus sufficiently on improving the skills of tutors.
- Managers and staff have a strong focus on learners developing their work-related skills through links with local agencies and partnerships, with external visits and visiting speakers. A good proportion of learners undertake volunteering roles; however, only a minority of learners access external work placements.
- Leaders and managers monitor the destinations of learners once they leave Learning Matters and have identified that the majority move onto further training or employment. However, they do not know where a minority of learners go following their training.

■ The governance of the provider

- Senior leaders have a sufficient oversight of the study programmes and the need to provide opportunities for young people. They are fully aware of the poor performance in 2013/14 and have instigated actions to improve the quality of provision in the form of a revised management structure.
- The support, challenge and actions from trustees and senior leaders since 2014 have not yet demonstrated sufficient impact to ensure more learners stay on their programme and achieve their qualification outcomes.
- Systems in place to provide senior leaders with regular updates on the performance of learners on study programmes are too informal and lack detail.

■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

- The provider has robust procedures and policies to ensure the safety of learners and the effective recruitment of suitable members of staff. Staff and volunteers receive appropriate checks. Regular training benefits all staff and learners receive good-quality information at the start of their programme as part of their induction. Learners have a good understanding of safeguarding and of how to keep safe.
- Staff are confident in raising learners' awareness of the threats from extremism and radicalisation and have received recent training regarding the 'Prevent' agenda. Most are improving their understanding of radicalisation and extremism and have good relationships with external agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Too few learners completed their vocational qualifications successfully in 2014/15 and the achievement of English and mathematics qualifications for high needs learners is too low.
- Tutors on ESOL study programmes do not determine learners' starting points and prior knowledge to plan learning that challenges them sufficiently or set aspirational targets so they make the progress they are capable of. Reviews held with learners do not include all aspects of their study programme or give a sufficient overview of the progress they are making collectively with their qualifications. High needs learners do benefit from individually planned learning programmes based on their creative media or music interests,

their skills gaps in English and mathematics, and their specific support needs for one-to-one learning.

- Tutors do not plan or set sufficiently challenging tasks to allow learners, particularly the most able, to acquire and practise new skills and knowledge quickly enough. As a consequence, learners lose interest in classroom sessions and are not challenged sufficiently to achieve their potential.
- Written or recorded feedback does not contribute to helping learners make progress. In contrast, the oral feedback learners receive is very good and they benefit from the clear feedback given about what they need to do next and how to improve their work.
- Learners with high needs benefit from experienced, creative and professional vocational practitioners. Tutors provide a challenging mix of practical and theoretical skills, together with real life work placements, such as with a local radio music station and a film company, which help learners gain the skills and confidence they need for creative jobs or self-employment.
- Good quality, termly reviews keep high needs learners and their parents or carers well informed of their progress.
- Tutors develop ESOL learners' basic mathematics skills effectively and make good use of targeted questioning to assess learning. For example, learners learn to identify basic two-dimensional shapes correctly and to calculate area and perimeter. Learners improve their speaking and listening skills effectively in mathematics lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement

- Attendance is unacceptably low. Staff expectations of learners are not high enough and actions to improve poor attendance are slow. Attendance is particularly low for high needs learners on the English and mathematics elements of their programme, resulting in low success rates.
- Tutors provide a good level of support that helps learners, some with complex needs, to develop their personal and social skills. Learners develop their confidence and self-esteem effectively and current learners are making good progress with their vocational qualifications.
- Learners with high needs gradually develop their confidence and social skills and learn to control their anxiety better when faced with new experiences. Small group and individual teaching and project work help learners get used to learning with others. Well-designed behaviour plans, based on detailed information, enable staff to interest and support learners well.
- Most learners make good progress in improving skills that they need in their quest for employment or further training and in their personal lives. For example, ESOL learners who begin their courses with low levels of competence in spoken English quickly gain the confidence and skills to speak in a wide range of situations.
- Learners benefit from useful enrichment activities to help them make informed career choices. Local police officers attend sessions to talk to learners about working in the police service, and visits to the local job centre take place to review employment opportunities. Learners gain a valuable insight into life in modern Britain through these activities.
- Standards of behaviour are high. Learners fully understand tutors' expectations and standards relating to appropriate behaviour and they demonstrate a high level of respect for their peers and teachers. Learners feel safe and they form good relationships with staff who deal with any concerns raised appropriately and confidentially.

Outcomes for learners require improvement

- While the proportion of learners completing their studies and achieving their qualification outcomes improved significantly in 2014/15, too many learners left their study programme early and did not achieve their qualifications. The proportion that did stay completed all aspects of their study programme and achieved well. Provider data indicate that most of the current learners are making good progress towards the completion of their qualifications.
- Managers and staff do not have high enough expectations of their learners with regard to attendance and retention. Expectations and targets set by staff do not focus sufficiently on work-related behaviours. However, while current learners are now making good progress towards the next stage of their employment or education it is too early to judge if they will progress to further education or employment.
- Learners' retention requires improvement. In 2014/15 too many learners failed to complete their studies. Positive actions, for example in the form of more effective advice and guidance at the start of their study programmes, ensure that learners are now better placed to complete their studies. Current provider data

indicate that learners' retention is now high.

- Learners completing their study programmes benefit from gaining good English and mathematical skills which are included in their lessons well. The large majority achieve their mathematics qualifications; however, in 2014/15 too few learners achieved their planned outcome in English.
- The monitoring of success by managers of different groups of learners accurately identifies an achievement gap where females achieve at a higher rate than male learners. Actions to close this gap are in place but it is too early to judge their impact.
- Too few learners progress into employment or further training. Managers do not monitor learners' destinations effectively enough.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	55
Principal/CEO	Oonagh Aitken
Website address	www.volunteeringmatters.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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	38	2	1	2	4	0	0	0
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
	N/A							
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)								
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age								
Number of traineeships								
Number of learners aged 14–16								
Funding received from								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:								

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Stephen Hunsley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Pippa Wainwright	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the learning manager 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 learners 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.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk



Employer View is a new website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too.

To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

