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Dear Ms Hunn

### **Short inspection of Hillingdon Adult Learning Service**

Following the short inspection on 13–14 January 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the service was judged to be good in February 2011.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

Learners continue to receive a good-quality experience and successfully take part in a wide range of courses and programmes. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. In most cases they take effective action to bring about the improvements needed, including those identified at the previous inspection. A few strategies, such as those to improve the attendance of learners, are new and not yet fully effective.

Leaders and managers have successfully reorganised the service since the previous inspection. The new service manager and leadership team approach their work with thought, integrity and passion. They are supported well by senior leaders in the local authority, who help managers expand the range of learning opportunities available to local residents. Since the previous inspection, elected members have invested significantly in information and learning technology (ILT) that has improved the experience of learners in the classroom.

Managers work closely with local partners both inside and outside the local authority to respond to new and emerging needs, such as the development of courses for prospective childminders and for residents with mental health problems, and attracting residents from the most deprived areas of the borough.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Managers have effective oversight of arrangements to safeguard learners. They apply safe recruitment procedures to select staff. Learners feel safe in centres and in lessons. Managers routinely scrutinise incidents where their safeguarding policies and procedures are called upon to be used. This ensures that managers and staff learn from their practice and that high standards of practice are maintained.

As a result of effective training, staff have a good awareness of how to identify and respond to learners whose welfare they have reason to be concerned about. Staff regularly use their knowledge to ensure that the welfare needs of learners are met and that they are adequately safeguarded. Staff ensure that learners get the help they need through referring learners to specialist agencies where necessary. Training in preventing radicalisation and extremism has built the capacity of staff effectively so that they identify concerns about learners and act promptly when needed.

## **Inspection findings**

- Senior leaders and managers have a good oversight of service development. They support well the development of the curriculum to ensure that it meets local needs. They commit financial support each year to ensure that managers develop programmes that engage a diverse range of local residents. Managers have recently developed a suite of key performance indicators to help them and senior leaders better identify the progress that they are making in bringing about improvements. The use of these measures is new and as such senior leaders do not always provide sufficient challenge to managers on how well areas for improvement are being tackled.
- Managers are effective in maintaining consistently good-quality teaching. They make secure judgements on the quality of teaching by undertaking regular observations of lessons. They accurately identify strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and use their findings well to plan effective training and development activities for tutors. This has led to improvements in teaching, for example in how well tutors use ILT to promote learning. Managers are committed to high standards of practice and take firm and proportionate action when staff underperform.
- At the previous inspection gaps in the achievement of different groups of learners were evident. Learners from African, Pakistani and Caribbean communities achieved less well than their peers. The inspection report recommended that managers make improvements. Managers have successfully implemented strategies to narrow the remaining achievement gaps between these groups and their peers. Data show that most groups of learners achieve equally well. Managers have developed a database that they use well to identify any learners who are at risk of not succeeding on their course. Managers and tutors have a good

understanding of the circumstances of each learner and plan carefully the support that learners need. As a result, the vast majority of learners remain on their courses and are on track to successfully complete their courses and achieve their learning goals.

- Managers have successfully ensured that a high proportion of learners successfully complete their programmes, including on those courses where this was previously low. Managers and staff consider in detail the factors affecting learners' progress. They have successfully developed support sessions where learners receive additional help with their work. Managers have implemented good assessments of learners' needs at the start of the programme in order to place learners on the right courses that meet their needs and aspirations well.
- At the previous inspection tutors did not use ILT effectively in lessons. Since the inspection, managers have provided effective training to help tutors develop their confidence and skills in using ILT. In lessons, tutors regularly use ILT to develop learners' knowledge through setting tasks using web-based materials and video clips. Tutors encourage learners to carry out research and read news articles online. Learners use ILT well to enhance their learning and skills development. For example, learners produced a video as part of a fundraising campaign, which enhanced their skills and raised money for charity.
- At the previous inspection tutors and learners made insufficient use of the virtual learning environment (VLE). Leaders and managers now promote the use of the VLE well and have significantly increased its use. Tutors use the VLE well to share resources with learners and provide feedback on their work. Learners use the VLE to practise skills they need to improve on, catch up on work they have missed and practise for their exams. Managers are continually working with staff to further develop the use of the VLE across all programmes.
- At the previous inspection tutors did not promote equality and diversity well enough in lessons. Tutors now plan programmes and lessons well to ensure that equality and diversity are effectively promoted. Tutors ensure that learners develop their understanding of different cultures. They promote British values effectively. In one lesson, for example, tutors helped learners explore their experiences of Christmas celebrations, of other religious festivals and of the setting of New Year resolutions, to broaden learners' understanding of different cultures and develop their written and spoken English skills.
- Tutors ensure that there is a culture of respect and tolerance in lessons. As a result, learners from a diverse range of backgrounds cooperate and work together purposefully. Tutors ensure that lessons take place in an environment where everyone can participate. They plan activities that meet the individual needs of learners well and enable learners to develop skills and knowledge in line with their own abilities.
- Managers identified that in the last academic year the attendance of learners overall required improvement. Managers are taking effective

action to improve the attendance of learners on most courses and in-year data show that attendance has improved. Managers closely monitor the attendance of learners on courses in the vast majority of subject areas. Managers have a good overview of learners' attendance from the electronic registers completed by tutors and identify well those courses where attendance remains a cause for concern. Tutors and student services officers quickly follow up incidents of absence. Most subject area leaders monitor attendance closely and produce monthly reports that allow managers to understand the reasons for poor attendance. However, in a small minority of subject areas the reasons for poorer attendance are not yet fully analysed. Managers understand well why this is and are taking effective action to improve performance in this area.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- they provide ongoing and rigorous challenge to service managers on the performance of the service so that they can be assured that areas for improvement are being consistently improved
- they fully understand the reasons for learners' poor attendance on a minority of programmes and implement strategies to improve it.

Yours sincerely

Jon Bowman  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors were assisted by the service manager for Hillingdon Adult Learning Service, as nominee. We met with you, senior leaders, managers, tutors and learners. We carried out lesson observations, took account of the most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. We used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and staff. We scrutinised data and information on the performance of the service and reviewed schemes of work, lesson plans, key policy documents and records of safeguarding concerns.