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Ms Carole Stewart
Assistant Director for Arts, Heritage and Libraries
Ealing Council
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Dear Ms Stewart

Short inspection of Ealing Adult Learning Service

Following the short inspection on 8 and 9 March 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in May 2010.

This provider continues to be good.

Senior leaders and managers have successfully maintained the good quality of provision seen at the previous inspection. Senior leaders within the council have taken a keen interest in the service and provided very effective support to managers, so that the adult education service is delivered as an integral part of the council's employment and skills strategy. Senior leaders and managers have considered carefully the education priorities for learners within the borough's different communities and successfully adapted the curriculum offered to meet these priorities.

Managers work very effectively with tutors to maintain high standards of teaching, learning and assessment. Since the previous inspection, they have improved the classroom facilities markedly and tutors have good access to, and make effective use of, information learning technology to make lessons interesting and help learners continue their studies outside the classroom. Through very well-planned staff development, managers continually support tutors to improve their teaching skills. Consequently, lessons are interesting, lively and characterised by a sense of fun. Learners enjoy their classes, their attendance is good, they are keen to learn and a very high proportion achieve their qualifications or learning goals.

Managers have a good overview of the strengths and areas for improvement of the provision, which they evaluate accurately in their self-assessment report. They identify and implement well the actions needed to bring about improvement and have successfully implemented most of the recommendations from the previous inspection.

Senior leaders and managers have maintained their excellent partnership working, which was identified as a strength at the previous inspection. Senior leaders' and council members' collaboration with other local authorities in the West London Alliance sets the positive tone for the service's approach to partnerships. This is replicated at all levels of the organisation, from managers' effective participation in the West London Peer Review Group as part of the arrangements to manage quality improvement, to the close working with school headteachers in resourcing and delivering family learning programmes to meet changing local community needs.

Safeguarding is effective.

Managers have effective arrangements in place to safeguard learners, and senior leaders maintain a good oversight of safeguarding. Curriculum managers have accountability for safeguarding learners within their areas of responsibility and this ensures that they have a detailed knowledge of any incidents, should they occur. In the few cases where concerns have been raised, managers have responded quickly and effectively. Managers' arrangements to safeguard vulnerable adults are comprehensive and, where necessary, suitable risk assessments are in place. Managers ensure that the two subcontractors, who between them teach around a third of the courses offered, work to the service's high standards, including with regard to health and safety and safeguarding.

Managers' implementation of the service's obligations with regard to the 'Prevent' duty has been carried out in a timely way and is integrated well into the council's 'Prevent' strategy. All staff have completed online and face-to-face training and inspectors saw good examples of tutors raising learners' awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremist views. Through their partnerships with local community groups, staff have a good understanding of, and respond appropriately to, any emerging issues, such as child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders and managers use key performance targets effectively to set the ambition for the service. They link the targets of the adult learning service very well to the council's wider employment and skills strategy, and use these targets to maintain a high level of performance.
- Managers have good data on learners' progress and performance and use them well to evaluate the provision. They make good use of local benchmarking data and the views of learners. Managers use detailed weekly reports to scrutinise closely the progress that learners make and quickly resolve any issues as they arise. Their diligence has ensured that learners make good progress and achieve their goals.
- Managers do not use sufficiently well the data that they have to monitor, or to report to senior leaders on, the performance of different groups of learners. They also have more work to do to understand learners' progression to further learning or employment which, on a minority of courses, requires improvement.

- Managers' quality assurance arrangements are effective, both for their own provision and that taught by subcontractors. Managers have a thorough approach to the observation of teaching and learning, which they link effectively to staff appraisals. Consequently, they have maintained high standards of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Learners are enthusiastic and tenacious, with a strong drive to learn, make progress and achieve. They prepare well for lessons. Tutors give a lot of encouragement and positive verbal feedback to learners that helps build their confidence and skills. For example, learners on foreign language courses quickly develop proficiency in the language learned and many progress to higher levels of learning.
- Tutors understand their learners well and most ensure that lessons are lively and maintain learners' interest. Tutors have a good rapport with their learners and they create an environment in which learners are confident to try things out, take risks, and learn from their successes and mistakes. A notable feature of many lessons is the extent to which learners work together and provide each other with encouragement and support.
- In a few cases, tutors pitch the tasks and activities at the same level, despite learners having different abilities. In these lessons, tutors do not provide work that is demanding enough for those who are more able.
- Tutors promote social and cultural diversity well and learners respect each other and appreciate people's differences. For example, in family learning, tutors manage discussions well regarding the different characteristics of mothers and fathers. In English lessons, tutors ensure that names used in examples for letter writing reflect a diverse community, and, in painting and drawing, the tutor uses pictures that promote positive images of people from different ethnic backgrounds.
- In a small minority of cases tutors do not reinforce the development of learners' skills in English and mathematics sufficiently. At times, tutors use terminology in lessons, or in handouts, that is beyond the language skill level of a minority of learners. On non-accredited courses, tutors do not consistently reinforce the use of study skills, such as note-making, to prepare those learners who intend to go on to further courses or gain qualifications.
- Managers have had a strong and mostly successful focus on improving tutors' use of individual learning plans with learners. Tutors all understand the importance of using these plans and, in the majority of cases, they set and review targets with learners that help them achieve. A minority of tutors do not record learners' intended progression at the start of their programme, but leave this to the end, so learners do not consistently link the skills gained on their course to their wider or longer-term aspirations.
- On most courses tutors are very skilled at ensuring that learners use and develop skills for future employment. On courses for supporting teaching and learning, learners received good guidance on how to prepare for, and what to expect in, a job interview. Learners on a cake-decorating course learned how to critique their own and each other's work through expertly managed debate. They made excellent use of technical terminology, spoke with clarity and enthusiasm, listened carefully and made responses to one another and, as a result, learned from each other.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- tutors record learners' longer-term goals on their independent learning plans and that they provide learners with the skills needed to achieve them, as well as the skills needed to succeed on their course
- tutors on all courses have the necessary skills to plan activities that meet the needs of learners, in particular the more able, and that they use language and terminology that is understandable to all learners
- they use the data they have to monitor, and report on, the achievement of different groups of learners, and improve the data available to understand learners' progression on completion of their course and ensure a higher proportion go on to further learning or employment.

I am copying this letter to the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rieks Drijver
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors. We were assisted by the Adult Learning Manager as nominee. We visited a range of sites to observe teaching, learning and assessment and to look at learners' work. We met with senior leaders, managers and stakeholders. We reviewed key documents including the service's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, data related to the performance of learners currently on programmes, and documents related to safeguarding.