

# Norfolk County Council

Local authority

**Inspection dates**

18–21 April 2016

**Overall effectiveness****Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Outcomes for learners

Good

Adult learning programmes

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have dealt quickly and very effectively with key issues identified at the previous inspection.
- Leaders work well with local and regional partners to ensure that the curriculum is closely aligned to Norfolk's and learners' needs.
- Success rates for courses in English and mathematics are high with a high proportion of learners achieving a grade A\* to C in GCSEs in English and mathematics.
- Learners develop good personal, social and employment skills.
- Learners' attendance is high and leaders' actions have increased to a high level the number of learners who complete their courses.
- Teachers provide good verbal feedback to help learners understand how to improve the quality of their work.
- Teachers use their experience and knowledge well to prepare learners for employment.
- Leaders have worked well to improve teaching, learning and assessment, which are now good.
- Teachers and learning support staff provide good support for learners to help them stay on their programmes and achieve.
- Learners make good progress in developing their skills in English and mathematics.
- Employed learners make a positive contribution to their employers' business as a result of the skills that they develop.
- Learners receive good advice and guidance about their programme choices and their options for the future.
- Qualification success rates are high.

### It is not yet an outstanding provider

- A few weaknesses, such as the quality of written feedback to help learners improve, identified at the previous inspection, remain.
- A few teachers do not use the results of assessments of learners' starting points effectively to plan their learning.
- A minority of teachers do not use targets and written feedback well to challenge all learners to achieve their full potential.
- Teachers do not routinely and effectively develop learners' understanding of equality, diversity and British values.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- NCC Adult Education Services, now named Norfolk Community Learning Services (NCLS), is part of Norfolk County Council and provides apprenticeships and adult learning programmes. Most of the provision is adult learning programmes, which include family learning, community learning and work-based learning. A small but growing apprenticeship programme is offered. The programmes are delivered at NCLS' main base in Norwich and in a wide range of large and small venues across the county.
- Norfolk is a large rural county with a dispersed population of just under one million. Across the population, the levels of qualifications held are lower than nationally. Similarly, earnings are lower than the national average. The eastern coastal area around Great Yarmouth has high levels of deprivation. The proportion of working-age people who are unemployed is higher than the regional average, but lower than that nationally.

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

- Deal quickly with the few weaknesses remaining from the previous inspection, such as the poor quality of written feedback.
- Ensure that teachers have the skills, confidence and resources to help learners further their understanding of equality, diversity and British values.
- Ensure that all teachers:
  - provide detailed written feedback to learners on how they can improve
  - use the results of assessments of learners' starting points well to plan learning
  - increase the rigour and effectiveness with which they set targets for learners, particularly to challenge them to achieve their full potential.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management

is good

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have focused extremely well on dealing with the key weaknesses in order to improve the quality of the provision. As a result, learners are more successful in achieving qualifications and developing the skills they need to improve their lives. However, leaders acknowledge that there are a few areas where learners' success and the quality of provision still need to improve.
- Senior leaders and council officials have reviewed the services' strategic priorities thoroughly and ensured that these are aligned closely to the council's vision of 're-imagining Norfolk' and that of the New Anglia Enterprise Partnership. Staff and council officials see the service as an essential resource to help meet the educational and employment priorities for the county.
- Leaders use well their effective partnerships with local employers, other council departments and partners to ensure that learners have access to a wide range of courses. These partnerships focus well on engaging learners from the most deprived areas of the county to improve community relationships and learners' employment prospects. Leaders have increased the participation of these learners significantly and the proportion who receive useful employment-related training.
- Leaders and managers monitor learners' attendance and achievements closely. They use regular and comprehensive data to measure progress towards meeting challenging targets. Their improvement actions are swift and effective. As a result, learners' attendance has improved significantly and the large majority of current learners are making strong progress. However, the collection and analysis of information about learners' progression are neither well established nor used fully to improve the provision.
- Leaders and managers have invested heavily in providing high-quality, comprehensive staff training and development, which is aligned closely to the services' key areas for improvement. Managers monitor closely and accurately the impact of training through observations of teaching, learning and assessment and the development of learners' skills, such as in English and mathematics.
- Leaders and managers assess and improve the performance of staff very effectively. They deal swiftly and robustly with underperforming staff and partners. However, leaders are aware that underperformance in a few areas needs to be dealt with, such as in creative arts.
- Managers monitor subcontractors' performance closely and take robust action to deal with any concerns quickly. Managers work well with council partners and subcontractors in order to reach particular groups of learners who have been otherwise difficult to engage in learning activities, for example by providing sport-related courses such as referee training.
- Leaders and managers give the development of learners' English and mathematics skills a high priority. Achievement in these subjects is high and improving. Tutors reinforce the importance of English and mathematics in other subjects well.
- Senior leaders and managers evaluate thoroughly the quality of provision through comprehensive self-assessment. They use information from a wide range of sources to assess the provision and make accurate judgements about the quality of the provision. However, self-assessment by programme managers is less effective because their assessments are largely descriptive.
- Learners receive good careers advice and guidance before they start their programmes, which ensure that these meet their intended career or learning goals and prepare them for their next steps. Learners receive good ongoing advice and guidance during their course, which helps them to make well-informed decisions about future learning and employment choices.
- The governance of the provider
  - Senior council members, elected officials and steering group members, who constitute the governing body, support and challenge the head of service robustly to bring about rapid improvements.
  - Governors have a clear vision for the service and use their knowledge and skills well to ensure that priorities are closely aligned to those of the council and the needs of Norfolk's residents.
  - Governors monitor the performance of the provision regularly and in detail. They monitor attendance and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment particularly well.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective
  - Arrangements for safeguarding are thorough and include comprehensive safe recruitment processes. Staff receive good information and training about how to keep learners safe and are vigilant about safeguarding issues.

- Managers keep detailed records of safeguarding incidents and make appropriate referrals to support agencies. However, managers do not check that referrals are effectively resolved by partner agencies. As a result, records remain open and managers cannot confirm if an effective resolution has been achieved.
- Managers have ensured that all staff are trained to identify and refer those who are at risk of radicalisation or engagement in extremist activity. However, not all staff have sufficient confidence to promote meaningful discussions with learners about British values.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good across all provision types. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment robustly. Observations are accurate and improvement action is prompt and highly effective. Managers' analysis of observations identifies the few weaknesses found by inspectors correctly.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge and experience well to develop learners' skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, when discussing how to meet the needs of personal training clients in sport, learners developed their understanding of ways to remove clients' barriers to taking part in fitness classes. Teachers of programmes about working with children use their knowledge well to help learners understand a child's personal, social and emotional development.
- Learners benefit from teachers' good verbal feedback about the quality of their work and what they can do to improve it further. Teachers mix this constructive feedback well with providing good support and encouragement. As a result, learners make at least expected progress and develop the skills to evaluate their work and to work independently.
- Teachers use questioning and a range of activities well to monitor learners' progress. For example, those teaching apprentices use probing questions to further develop learners' understanding. In sports lessons, teachers make good use of lively interactive quizzes, in fast-paced activities, to check learners' understanding of anatomy and physiology.
- Teachers place a high importance on the development of learners' English and mathematics skills in lessons. For example, floristry learners use mathematics skills well to set and monitor the costs for each arrangement they make. Teachers working with apprentices reinforce well their understanding of the need for accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, teachers of adult learning programmes do not always correct English errors in learners' written work.
- Learners benefit from very good support, both during and outside lessons. Teachers provide additional individual coaching if needed. Learners lacking the confidence to attend group classes benefit from these sessions. In addition, a specialist support team is extremely effective at helping most learners deal well with a range of challenges, such as mental health, domestic violence and homelessness. As a result, many of these learners stay on, or rejoin, their programme and achieve their goals.
- In a small minority of lessons, learners are not challenged sufficiently well to achieve their full potential. While learners make at least expected progress and gain skills and qualifications, teachers do not use targets and written feedback well enough to help learners to achieve at the highest level of which they are capable. In a few areas, such as family learning, written feedback is of excellent quality and targets are used very effectively. However, in other areas, such as lessons in basic English and mathematics, these are not used well enough. A minority of teachers do not use the results of assessments of learners' starting points well enough to plan learning and set challenging targets.
- A few teachers make insufficient checks on learning to ensure that learners have understood before moving on. They often do not check the understanding of less confident learners.
- The majority of teachers do not extend learners' understanding of equality and diversity in society, and their role in modern Britain based on British values. Teachers make brief reference to these subjects in lessons and include relevant points in lesson plans. However, most staff lack the confidence to deal with these subjects in detail.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

- Learners enjoy their learning. They develop good skills to help them learn such as in note-taking and using reference materials effectively. They are eager to learn and well prepared for learning sessions. Learners are proud of their work and recognise the benefits of their learning programmes.

- Good advice and guidance ensure that learners are clear about their goals and their future direction. They have a good understanding of the skills that they develop and how they can use them. For example, learners on sports programmes understand clearly what their future options are. Learners on family learning programmes know how to use their skills, such as cooking, to help their children and families.
- Learners' attendance is high. Learners are rarely late and teachers always challenge lateness effectively.
- Learners use the clear advice and guidance provided by staff, for example about the benefits of healthy diets, to help them stay healthy and safe. They use information such as a well-written and informative booklet about staying safe and healthy to increase their knowledge, for example of healthy eating recipes. Learners' awareness of internet safety is high because of the good focus by staff on this topic. Learners feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Learners develop their personal, social and employment skills well. For example, through planning for a spring festival, business administration apprentices developed good problem-solving skills. In family learning, learners develop the ability to work both in groups and individually. Learners develop the right attitudes for work very well including by drawing on teachers' good experience to support this. Learners work well together.
- Learners' behaviour in learning sessions and at work is good. They make good use of the clear and detailed guidance about behaviour provided by staff. The rare incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with fairly, but robustly. As a result, learners work harmoniously and productively in lessons.

## Outcomes for learners

are good

- Leaders have halted the decline, up to and including the academic 2013/14, in learners' success rates successfully and increased these significantly. Success rates for apprentices are high. Managers acknowledge that success rates for learners on adult learning programmes were below the national rate in 2014/15. However, success rates for current learners on adult learning programmes are already higher than at the same point last year, despite the fact that the results for several courses are not yet available as they are externally marked.
- Leaders have developed a robust system for monitoring learners' outcomes. They have a good understanding of the very few areas where performance needs to be improved. Learners' achievement on sub-contracted provision, which accounts for a fifth of the provision, is exceptional.
- Leaders and managers have developed an effective system for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited provision. Managers review teachers' assessments regularly and with great rigour. As a result, leaders have a very accurate picture of learners' progress. Learners on these courses achieve well.
- Learners make at least the progress expected of them relative to their starting points and, often, they make good progress, particularly on apprenticeships. Different groups of learners achieve equally well. The quality of learners' work meets the requirements of their qualification aims. However, teachers do not challenge them to produce the very best work of which they are capable consistently.
- Learners develop good skills in English and mathematics. Success rates in qualifications in these subjects are high. The proportion of learners who achieve grades A\* to C in GCSEs in English and mathematics is much higher than the national rate. Learners on other programmes also develop these skills well.
- Many learners progress onto higher levels of qualifications or into employment. For example, almost all learners who were on functional skills courses progressed to either higher-level courses or employment. However, leaders have only just started analysing this progression in detail.
- Leaders are aware that in a very few subjects, such as creative arts, learners' success rates are not improving quickly enough.

## Types of provision

### Adult learning programmes

are good

- Most learners study part-time adult learning programmes. The programmes cover a broad range of subjects including English, mathematics and functional skills. Courses are a mixture of those leading to qualifications, those based on skills development, and those for community learning.
- Leaders have made strong progress in improving the quality of adult learning programmes and ensuring that these meet the needs of the local community. Much of the provision is aimed at learners who need to learn particular skills, and the provision meets these needs well.

- Leaders work well with community partners to meet learners' needs. Learning programmes enable learners to overcome barriers to employment and develop their personal and social skills well. For example, a large majority of learners on family learning courses progress onto higher-level courses in English and mathematics, or into employment. However, managers do not analyse this progression information well enough to inform future planning.
- Learners develop good skills in English and mathematics. They apply these skills well. For example, in one lesson, learners used mathematics skills to calculate the proportion of sugar in foods in order to cook healthy meals. Teachers work well with learners in all subjects to help them develop skills in English and mathematics.
- As a result of high expectations, good support and good verbal feedback in lessons, learners make at least the progress expected of them and a minority make good progress. Most learners achieve their qualifications or learning aims, and current learners are achieving at a higher rate than at the same point last year. In many cases, the support for learners provided by staff extends beyond the classroom and helps those who fall behind to continue with their studies and achieve.
- Learners attend well, develop their confidence, and enjoy and prepare well for their lessons. Staff give good initial advice and guidance to ensure that learners are on the right programme.
- Learners feel safe and respect each other. They develop good teamwork skills and integrate well with their peers.
- Learners do not develop their understanding of equality and diversity, and their role in modern Britain sufficiently well. While lesson plans cover these topics, teachers are not always confident to discuss them. In a very few cases, teachers use materials that are not appropriate for the development of learners' understanding of these topics.
- Teachers do not always provide sufficient challenge to all learners. Teachers do not always provide more difficult work for those learners who make progress more quickly than others. Teachers generally plan lessons well, including for learning support assistants, to help learners develop their practical skills. However, in a minority of cases, teachers do not use information on learners' starting points sufficiently well to plan and monitor individuals' learning.
- A minority of teachers provide poor written feedback. This feedback does not provide learners with sufficiently detailed comments on the quality of their work or how they can improve. However, teachers' written feedback on a few programmes, such as in family learning, is excellent. Learners regularly assess their own work and learn to work independently as a result.

## **Apprenticeships**

## **are good**

- The service currently provides for 221 apprentices. This is a significant increase from the 16 in 2014/15. Apprentices study one of five subjects: business administration; education and training; health, public services and care; construction; and information and communication technology. Seventy-nine are advanced apprentices and 65 are on apprenticeships at a higher level.
- Leaders have managed the rapid expansion extremely well, while ensuring that the provision meets the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. They use their good links with local partnerships and employers to ensure that the provision meets local and regional needs well. Leaders have dealt well with the key weaknesses found at the previous inspection – in particular, success rates, which have improved and are now high.
- Managers and teachers monitor apprentices' progress frequently and thoroughly, so that most apprentices achieve their qualification on time, with a small minority achieving ahead of time. Assessors use very effective records to monitor and plan assessment and the further development of apprentices' skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Apprentices develop good English, mathematics, and information and communication technology skills. They use these skills well at work. Teachers provide strong challenge to learners to achieve their full potential in these skills. Apprentices' achievement in these elements of their programme is very high.
- Managers and teachers work very well with employers to plan on- and off-the-job training. Teachers integrate well the training provided by employers with learning programmes. As a result, apprentices are prepared very well for sustained employment in their jobs.
- Teachers provide good support for apprentices. Teachers use probing questions well to help apprentices deepen their knowledge. They use a range of ways very effectively to maintain good contact with apprentices.

- Apprentices make a valued contribution to their employers' business and have a positive attitude to work. They develop a wide range of relevant skills, such as a detailed knowledge of children's behaviour for apprentices working with children. Employers greatly value each apprentice's role and apprentices gain additional responsibilities as a result of the skills they acquire. However, managers do not monitor fully where apprentices progress to on completion of their programme.
- Apprentices develop a range of additional skills that enhance their employability. Managers provide a wide range of additional short courses and workshops to develop these skills, for example in conflict management. Apprentices attend one or more of these courses, which also develop their confidence well. Employers value these courses highly.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of health and safety in the workplace. They feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Teachers do not always help apprentices develop their vocational skills beyond the level required by the qualification. In too many cases, teachers' written feedback does not provide enough guidance to help apprentices to achieve at the highest level they are capable of. Apprentices are not always challenged by the sometimes insufficiently detailed targets set by teachers, to achieve their full potential.
- Teachers do not focus well enough on developing apprentices' understanding of equality, diversity and British values. However, apprentices are respectful of each other and understand well their rights and responsibilities at work.

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Local authority
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	8,000
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Helen Wetherall
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/education-and-learning/adult-learning">www.norfolk.gov.uk/education-and-learning/adult-learning</a>

## 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+
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	0	6,946	0	859	0	124	0	25
<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+		
	25	52	10	69	0	65		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	N/A							
<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>■ Norfolk Football Association</li> <li>■ Norwich City Community Sports Foundation</li> </ul>							



## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Derrick Baughan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Shane Langthorne	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mary Aslett	Ofsted Inspector
Laurie Brown	Ofsted Inspector
Harpreet Nagra	Ofsted Inspector
Jackie Watt	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the assistant head of service for quality, as nominee. 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 the relevant provision at the provider.

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