Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Local Authority

Inspection dates



26-29 April 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
overali 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 Adult learning programmes Requires improvement Apprenticeships Requires improvement **Traineeships** Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Tutors and assessors do not set challenging personal and work-related targets for learners, and as a result they do not achieve as well as expected.
- Tutors and assessors do not effectively support learners in their understanding of diversity and British values and do not adequately prepare all learners for life in modern Britain.
- Quality-assurance arrangements for the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment are insufficiently comprehensive and lack rigour.
- Tutors and assessors do not routinely encourage or support learners to improve their English and mathematic skills throughout their programme; learners currently make insufficient progress in these key subject areas.

Good

- Managers' poor use of data has resulted in delay in the identification of emerging trends and the instigation of remedial action.
- Management oversight of the quality of subcontractors' work is weak.

The provider has the following strengths

- Stoke-on-Trent City Council has effective collaborative partnerships to ensure that they engage with a diverse range of groups and individuals, offering courses to the most disadvantaged and hard-to-reach learners.
- Learners on study programmes, traineeships and apprenticeships have access to good-quality working environments and apprentices gain particularly good vocational skills.
- Learners benefit from good pastoral assistance that helps them to access support with finance, transport and other personal issues.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The employment and skills delivery team of Stoke-on-Trent City Council operates throughout the city at over 130 venues. The vast majority of programmes offered by the service are non-accredited adult community learning.
- Adult skills programmes range from pre-entry to level 2. Work-based learning programmes are offered up to level 3. The provider has over 3,795 learners on adult community learning, 41 apprentices, 11 learners on study programmes and eight on traineeships.
- The city's population is predominantly White British, but is becoming more ethnically diverse and has a significant Asian/Asian British community. The proportion of the population that is unemployed is higher than national levels. A significant proportion of residents, nearly double the national average, claim Employment and Support Allowance. The percentage of the city's adult population without formal qualifications is more than double the national average and half the national average at level 4. For the performance of its secondary schools at Key Stage 4, Stoke-on-Trent is among the 10 lowest-performing local authority areas nationally.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Managers must develop a strategy for English and mathematics for all learners that will support them in applying these essential skills in a wide range of contexts.
- Implement arrangements to ensure the extension and reinforcement of all learners' knowledge and understanding of diversity and of fundamental British values.
- Managers should improve the use of data to enable them to monitor programme performance more effectively, including that of subcontractors. They should use this data to implement actions to raise success and achievement rates rapidly and significantly. Managers should identify differences in performance between groups of learners and implement swiftly corrective actions.
- Ensure that tutors set learners ambitious and achievable personal and work-related targets that they understand. Learners and tutors should review these targets regularly to advance their progress in skills and knowledge.
- Prioritise in the post-inspection action plan key areas for improvement identified in this inspection.
- Review quality assurance arrangements for teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that they focus on the right areas; apply the revised arrangements more rigorously to drive up the quality of provision.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the quality of the provision has declined and now requires improvement. Governors have only very recently enhanced arrangements for the scrutiny of senior managers' performance. Inspectors at this early stage in implementation found no tangible impact on the pace of improvement in adult and community learning.
- Leaders and senior managers have successfully modernised the service to ensure that it supports more appropriately the council's drive to raise achievement within the city. The senior management team has effectively addressed the significant staff turnover within the service. An organisational restructuring has given staff clearer roles and responsibilities. Managers have strengthened the accountability for performance management, though they have yet to complete a full review of the curriculum.
- Managers do not have a strategy for improving all learners' English and mathematics skills. Current plans, agreed by managers, do not support learners in improving their skills in these subjects throughout their time in learning. Managers do not routinely check feedback to learners to ensure that improving English and mathematics is a high priority for teaching staff and learners alike.
- The monitoring of subcontractors' performance for contract compliance purposes is effective. However, managers make insufficient use of direct observation to assess the quality of subcontractors' teaching. The observation process is not subject to a rigorous moderation to ensure reliability in judgements. Managers do not conduct an overall evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to inform curriculum review and improvement processes. As part of their recruitment process, all subcontractors subject their staff to relevant safeguarding vetting, but the provider's recording of the outcomes of this process is not thorough and systematic enough.
- Managers collect a wide range of data but do not use it well enough to monitor performance rigorously against ambitious targets. Delays in reviewing data, other than for contract compliance purposes, have resulted in managers' slowness in the identification of emerging trends and the instigation of remedial action. In-year improvements in apprenticeship progress rates reflect the very recent improvements in managers' use of data. Attendance monitoring arrangements are effective.
- Partnership working is good. The service uses its links with the Local Enterprise Partnership effectively to plan the programme offer and avoid duplication. Through the good use of the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, managers have developed a wide range of links with specialist agencies to support learners with barriers to learning. For example, partnership working with a charity has resulted in looked after children receiving advocacy help that has significantly increased the proportion of this group staying in education or employment. The service's careers service works well with schools to identify Year 9 pupils who are at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). This work has reduced the city's NEET rate to below the regional and national rates.
- All staff participate in a good range of development opportunities that are available online and through attendance at tutor-led training sessions. Managers make good use of annual appraisals and more regular supervision meetings to identify and address staff training needs. Currently managers have not completed all appraisals by the planned dates. Managers do not evaluate sufficiently the impact of tutors' training on professional practice as part of their improvement strategy.
- Leaders and managers have effectively extended the range and variety of provision since the previous inspection. All learning takes place in good-quality venues, with the recently opened venue for `Learn4work' learners offering a particularly high standard of accommodation.
- Self-assessment makes good use of a wide range of stakeholders' views to form judgements. The reports correctly identify many of the strengths and some of the weaknesses found at inspection. Inspectors found managers had not prioritised some key areas for improvement in their analysis and associated action plans, such as the individualisation of learning, embedding English and mathematics and the promotion of British values to learners.

■ The governance of the provider

Governors have very recently enhanced their scrutiny of senior managers' performance, though it is too early to evaluate its impact on the pace of improvement in adult community learning. The cabinet member with responsibility for education and economy effectively challenges service managers about progress in meeting agreed targets. The cabinet member has given a particularly strong lead to service managers during the local area review and challenged where appropriate, for example in the planned delivery model for the emerging city-wide apprenticeship offer.

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- Governance arrangements provide good challenge and support to leaders and managers in formulating the service's strategic and business objectives. These link well with those of the city council.
- Governance scrutiny includes the use of an appropriate range of data and outcomes from quality
 assurance processes to inform actions for improvement, but governors' scrutiny is restricted by quality
 assurance arrangements which are insufficiently comprehensive or rigorous particularly in relation to
 teaching, learning and assessment and the overview of subcontractors' performance.

■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have improved the safeguarding arrangements and further developed a caring culture that protects all learners.
- The designated safeguarding officer uses close links with the local children's safeguarding board to
 identify and respond to local and regional objectives. Relevant and regularly reviewed polices are in
 place. Managers follow safe recruitment practices. Managers ensure the appropriate risk assessment
 of venues used for learning sessions and the implementation of health and safety control measures
 where required.
- Managers effectively ensure that all staff receive suitable initial safeguarding and update training. In addition, they participate in relevant development opportunities designed to protect learners from radicalisation and extremism. Managers have a sound understanding of the 'Prevent' duty but have not done enough to ensure that all learners have sufficient appreciation of how fundamental British values apply to their lives.
- Most learners have an appropriate understanding of e-safety and how to protect themselves when using web-based media.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- Tutors do not ensure that all learners find sessions sufficiently challenging, and therefore learners do not progress to their full potential. In less effective sessions, tutors do not plan sufficiently well to ensure that learners are engaged in activities and grasp new concepts. In more effective sessions, tutors check learners' understanding well and challenge the more able to investigate wider concepts.
- Tutors' support for learners to increase their understanding of different cultures requires improvement. Too many tutors observed during the inspection did not use available opportunities to help learners improve their understanding of diversity. Managers recognise the need to improve learners' understanding of equality and diversity. Staff do not have well-developed plans to ensure that all learners widen their knowledge.
- Tutors do not routinely agree targets with learners that help them improve their skills in English and mathematics. Tutors do not routinely correct learners' spelling and grammar although the provider has this expectation. Many handouts contain spelling errors, including one for the initial assessment of English skill levels. Tutors integrate mathematics in lessons, but learners do not have a good understanding of these skills and cannot apply them in a wide range of situations.
- Tutors do not do not use information and learning technology (ILT) sufficiently or put other strategies in place to ensure that learners improve their independent learning skills and extend their learning outside of taught sessions.
- Tutors do not fully utilise support staff in classrooms to encourage learners' self-sufficiency and give them the confidence to make progress in their learning according to their potential.
- Managers do not ensure that they observe all tutors frequently enough and that all tutors receive action plans to help them improve their teaching. Observers put too much emphasis on teaching techniques. They do not evaluate sufficiently the impact of the session on learners' progress and their acquisition of new skills and knowledge.
- Learners in 'Learn4Work' benefit from a modern, well-resourced new building to support their learning. Community learning venues are also well resourced and learners returning to study benefit from learning in local facilities.
- Tutors have appropriate qualifications for the subjects they teach. Assessors have good vocational experience that benefits apprentices. Enthusiastic and passionate tutors act as good role models in the vast majority of cases.
- Good pastoral support staff help learners to access learning and support them with finance, transport and other personal issues.
- The 'engagement team' successfully engages with a diverse range of hard-to-reach learners, including learners who speak English as an additional language; workers who have been made redundant; those

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- attending Polish Saturday school; and the Asian community. Good communication between the engagement team and tutors ensures that all learners are on the appropriate level and type of course.
- Assessors ensure that apprentices gain good vocational skills throughout their programme above that expected of the qualification. Assessors offer additional qualifications that enhance apprentices' employability. For example, sports students complete emergency first aid that will help them to gain employment.
- Learners on study programmes and traineeships benefit from developing their skills within good-quality work experience.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

- Tutors do not effectively raise and reinforce learners' understanding of British values. As a result, learners' knowledge of what constitutes British values and how they apply these to their personal experience is not good enough.
- Staff do not do enough to raise learners' awareness of diversity and so learners are not sufficiently well prepared in this aspect of life in modern Britain.
- For the large majority of sessions, learners' attendance requires improvement. In a small minority of adult classes, tutors do not adequately challenge learners' poor punctuality, or fail to start classes promptly, which demotivates those learners who attend at the planned time.
- On study programmes, tutors develop learners' English well but they are less effective at improving mathematics skills. In a minority of cases, tutors do not set challenging work for the most-able learners to help them attain to a higher level. In adult community learning, tutors do not integrate essential English and mathematic skills into everyday situations for learners to support their further development. In apprenticeships, assessors do not do enough to support the development of apprentices' skills in English and mathematics, and personal learning and thinking skills.
- Learners have too little opportunity to develop independent learning skills or extend their learning outside formal, taught sessions.
- Learners are able to access a good range of careers advice and information that effectively extends their understanding of available options and informs future decision making. Learners on study programmes have a particularly good appreciation of both short- and long-term career goals because of the support they receive. The pre-course information on the city-wide range of courses is comprehensive, but informal guidance from tutors does not always ensure that adult learners gain an adequate understanding of development opportunities offered by other providers.
- Learners gain personal confidence and motivation throughout their courses. They enjoy participating in the course activities, which for many adults is often their first experience of structured learning for a considerable time. In the best cases, tutors act as role models for the benefits of undertaking personal development and encourage learners to continue with their studies. Sport apprentices make good gains in developing their skills in working with others and demonstrate a high standard of manners and behaviour within a wide variety of social situations. They participate in enrichment activities that allow them to develop their personal skills well. Learners on study programmes improve their behaviour and gain a more positive attitude to learning.
- Learners produce an appropriate and, in a minority of cases, good standard of completed work. Employability and workplace skills development for apprentices is good and effectively supports their career plans. Business administration apprentices become more valued employees through the application of their newly acquired skills and knowledge within the workplace. In a small number of cases, tutors are not effective in developing adult learners' appreciation of how personal appearance contributes to enhanced employability.
- Learners and tutors treat each other with mutual respect and work collaboratively to contribute to productive learning environments across the different centres.
- All learners have a suitable understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They state they feel safe and appropriately protected while participating in education and training. Learners develop a fitting understanding of how health and safety practices relate to them, with learners on study programmes making good gains in applying this knowledge in a range of contexts.
- Adults on dedicated English and mathematics courses develop useful skills and knowledge that they can apply well to everyday situations. For example, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners have developed a relevant vocabulary that enables them to attend medical appointments independently.

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Outcomes for learners

require improvement

- Tutors do not support all learners sufficiently to ensure that they all achieve to their potential. Assessors do not ensure that all apprentices complete on time. This year managers have made the traineeship and study programmes more suited to the needs and aspirations of learners and as a result, many more learners are successfully achieving their in-year goals.
- Managers have not identified that on accredited courses men achieve better than women, or those with a visual impairment achieve less well than those who have a mental health issue.
- Many learners in community learning improve their confidence and study skills and progress onto a more-challenging course. Progression from community learning to accredited courses has risen this year but remains too low. Not enough learners on study programmes progress to apprenticeships after completion of their course. The vast majority of apprentices move into permanent employment.
- Managers prioritise successfully the transition of learners who have previously been in local authority care into further study to enhance their potential to gain sustained employment. Some 20% of learners on study programmes are care leavers this year.
- Tutors ensure that the majority of learners are making their expected progress in sessions. Learners work at the appropriate level and produce good work relevant to their stage of education and training. Apprentices are gaining valuable vocational skills while on their programme.
- Learners' feedback clearly shows that learners enjoy participating in their courses and they value their newly acquired skills. During inspection, learners spoke highly of their tutors. Learners appreciate the learning experiences offered to them by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Stoke-on-Trent City Council has 11 learners on study programmes. Almost all of the learners are under 19 years of age. They follow individual programmes of study that aim to prepare them for employment and further training in sport. The individual programmes fulfil the principles of study programmes, but not enough learners complete all aspects of their programme successfully.
- Tutors' planning of sessions is not consistently thorough, and the pace of learning is often too slow. As a result of this, learners do not always benefit fully from all of the time they spend in lessons and do not progress as well as expected. Although improving, they are still not achieving to the required standard.
- Improvements in functional skills achievement in mathematics and English demonstrate that most learners are making substantial progress in these subjects, but tutors do not do enough in vocational sessions to ensure that learners improve their mathematical skills quickly enough.
- Managers have not yet finalised arrangements to ensure that eligible learners can improve their GCSE grades. However, this has not disadvantaged any learners this year.
- Staff pay good attention to ensuring that learners are safe by making sure they understand and observe safe working practices and guidance. Learners are proud of their good knowledge of the correct use of personal protective equipment and know how to move and handle safely large pieces of gym equipment such as trampolines, netting and goal posts. Learners have a shallow knowledge of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- Staff provide very effective individual and pastoral support to ensure that all learners overcome personal difficulties and barriers to their success. Staff use initial assessment and induction processes to capture accurately each learner's individual needs and interests. Staff ensure that all learners have clear individual targets and they use these to help learners develop the skills they need to be successful.
- In lessons, tutors focus strongly on employment and further training. Learners benefit from wellorganised external work experience that links clearly to their interests and aspirations. Last year, all eligible learners took part in high-quality work experience.
- Tutors monitor and record the destinations of all learners once they have completed their programmes. A good proportion of learners progress to a higher level within the provider. Most of those who complete their programme progress to further education, training, or employment. A low but increasing proportion progress into an apprenticeship.

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Adult learning programmes

require improvement

- Stoke-on-Trent City Council offers a broad range of provision for adult learners, including: vocational courses; a community learning programme; a family learning programme; courses in English, mathematics and ESOL; and courses to prepare people for employment. Currently, 3,795 learners are enrolled on adult learning programmes.
- Most learners on adult learning programmes do not have individual learning targets based on the results of the assessments carried out at the start of the course. Most learners work on the same tasks during sessions irrespective of their different starting points. Consequently, teaching, learning and assessment do not meet the individual needs of all learners. The most-able learners do not make progress according to their potential and the less able fall behind. Too many tutors do not record learners' progress towards meeting their learning targets well enough. The majority of learners are not sufficiently aware of the progress they have made towards achieving their learning targets. Learners who have made more than the progress expected do not benefit from having revised learning targets to challenge them to extend their learning further.
- Tutors do not promote diversity sufficiently well. They do not raise learners' awareness of people's differences to prepare them well for life and work in modern Britain.
- Learners on community learning programmes develop their self-confidence and communication skills well. This enables them to build effective relationships within their communities and to participate more effectively in everyday life. A high proportion of these learners progress to other community learning programmes that enable them to learn new skills, such as cooking healthy meals, working effectively as part of a team and using the internet to search for jobs.
- The majority of tutors use teaching and learning activities effectively to interest and motivate learners. This enables the majority of learners to make the progress they should during sessions. For example, in a nail art class, learners produced different designs for varnishing nails to a good standard.
- Learners on English and mathematics courses benefit from an early assessment that identifies their starting point accurately so they are on a course at the appropriate level for their learning needs.

Apprenticeships

require improvement

- Tutors provide apprenticeships in sports and business administration at level 2 and level 3. Currently there are 41 apprentices: 18 on business programmes and 23 on sports-related programmes. Some 24 apprentices are aged 16 to 18, 17 are aged over 19
- Last year not enough apprentices completed their qualifications. This year managers have introduced a more robust system for regular monitoring of apprentices' progress. Managers are effectively assessing the risk of apprentices falling behind and putting actions in place to help them complete. Currently the vast majority of apprentices are on target to finish their apprenticeship on time.
- Assessors use a range of relevant training and assessment activities that enable apprentices to develop a good range of work-related knowledge and skills. Apprentices consolidate and enhance these skills in the workplace with the support of their employers. One learner has applied the skills he gained on his programme to secure employment as a goalkeeping coach with a local premiership team.
- Assessors are well qualified and have appropriate industrial and commercial experience; they use this well to educate apprentices during their course.
- Assessors do not give apprentices targets that are specific enough to enable them to make the progress they are capable of and improve their skills rapidly enough; they are based on the achievement of modules and units within the framework and do not consider the development of apprentices' skills, especially in English and mathematics, personal development and thinking skills.
- Assessors do not sufficiently integrate functional skills and the development of apprentices' English and mathematics into the programme. Apprentices are not aware of the importance of these skills for their future employment prospects.
- Apprentices benefit from good links with employers. Employers take part in devising and contributing to the monitoring of apprentices' progress. Formal regular progress reviews involve the learner, employer and assessor. Assessors ensure that the programmes meet the needs of employers. Employers regard apprentices as an asset to their business.
- Most apprentices make good progress into further employment or training on completion of their programme.

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Traineeships

require improvement

- The provider has eight learners on traineeships. The learners are following courses and gaining experience in work settings that include sport and maintaining parks and gardens.
- Tutors do not do enough to ensure that all learners participate fully in lessons. For example, tutors do not plan activities well enough to make sure all of the learners are involved in discussions and answering questions; consequently, tutors give insufficient attention to ensuring that each learner is making a good rate of progress. Tutors do not check often enough that learning is taking place. Too often sessions do not start on time.
- Learners' achievement rates are improving, but too many do not complete all of their courses or gain sufficient qualifications.
- Learners do not improve their mathematical skills quickly enough because tutors do not provide a sufficient range of activities in enough sessions. The reverse of this is true for learners' development of skills in English, where learners' progress is often good.
- The majority of learners develop a good range of effective skills to help them prepare for employment. For example, learners understand the importance of being reliable and they adopt mature attitudes and demonstrate good behaviour. Tutors do not consistently ensure that learners understand the value of dressing appropriately for work, particularly the negative images that can be created by wearing hats and caps.
- A large majority of learners complete their traineeship successfully and progress into apprenticeships, employment with training or further education.
- Tutors provide learners with effective support which helps them make progress and prepares them well for their next steps. Many learners with low self-confidence and lacking in direction have made good progress into work placements where they work well and where employers value their contribution.
- Tutors collaborate particularly well with employers to ensure that learners are well matched to work experience and that they gain a wide array of job skills. Employers are involved well in reviewing learners' progress and agreeing challenging goals for them.
- Learners develop a very secure understanding of how to stay safe at work. As learners gain experience and progress on their course, they broaden their outlook, develop greater awareness of equality of opportunity and become better prepared for life in modern Britain.

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Provider details

Type of provider

Local authority

Age range of learners

16-18/19+

Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year

5,512

Principal/CEO

Julie Obada

Website address

www.stoke.gov.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			
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	11	867	0	98	0	0	0	0		
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		te	Advanced			Higher			
	16-18	16-18 19-		16-18 19-		16-	-18 19+			
	17	(5	8	11	0		0		
Number of traineeships	16-19			19+			Total			
	8									
Number of learners aged 14-16	NA									
_										
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency									

At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:

- Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire YMCA Foyer
- Brighter Futures Housing Association Limited
- Groundwork West Midlands
- LETS Academy Limited
- Changes Health and Wellbeing
- St John's Ambulance
- Taurean Solutions

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Tracey Zimmerman, lead inspector Her Majesty's Inspector

Nigel Bragg Her Majesty's Inspector

Brenda Clayton Ofsted Inspector
Daniel Grant Ofsted Inspector
Patrick McKinley Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the strategic manager, 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 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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