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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr E Scanlon
Head of Service
Macbeth Centre
Macbeth Street
Hammersmith
London
W6 9JJ

Dear Mr Scanlon

Short inspection of Hammersmith and Fulham Adult Learning and Skills Service (ALSS)

Following the short inspection on 17 and 18 November 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 June 2010.

This provider continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection six years ago, senior leaders and managers have successfully maintained good-quality provision for learners. Managers have maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection and successfully addressed the key areas for improvement.

Senior leaders, managers and staff are highly committed to delivering the best possible experience for learners and to supporting learners to achieve good outcomes. In the intervening years between inspections, managers have welcomed external scrutiny of the provision and worked effectively with neighbouring local authority services and external consultants to provide challenge to them on the quality of the provision.

Senior leaders and managers have high ambitions for learners and are successfully developing new programmes that meet the needs of learners well. Supported by senior leaders, managers develop effective links with other council services and external partners to broaden the curriculum on offer to learners.

The curriculum reflects well the corporate objectives of the council and is increasingly meeting the local employment needs of learners. For example, with the council's business investment team, managers have developed a popular and well-

attended monthly 'enterprise club'. Experienced local entrepreneurs give learners practical insights into what it is like to run your own business. Learners have opportunities to test out their products at a local market.

Senior leaders have good oversight of the performance of the service. As a result of regular briefings by managers and through their review of the self-assessment report, they are aware of the strengths of the service and where managers need to make further improvements. Senior leaders offer good support to managers in making improvements, such as championing improved online enrolment procedures and supporting the engagement of the service with local regeneration initiatives.

Learners enjoy their learning. Those with additional needs, such as learning disabilities and/or difficulties, and those on arts and crafts and well-being courses, achieve well. The vast majority of learners successfully complete their courses.

Learners take great pride in their work; they develop their self-esteem and improve their confidence as they acquire new skills and knowledge. For example, in upholstery lessons, learners renovate large items of furniture and develop their deep buttoning techniques, align folds and creases and match fabric appropriately. In jewellery classes, learners make delicate items to a high standard, including necklaces, earrings and bracelets, and offer these for sale.

Learners receive very effective support from teachers to help them overcome their barriers to learning. Many make good progress, develop new skills and knowledge well and broaden their interests. Learners gain many social benefits as a result of the courses they take, including making new friends, developing social networks and maintaining and improving their physical and mental health.

Managers are taking action to address those areas where performance needs to improve. The attendance of learners requires improvement, as does the achievement of learners taking basic English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) qualifications. Strategies employed by managers to make improvements in these areas are beginning to make a difference. Managers do not yet use a wide enough range of data to help them reflect on the performance of the service in reaching new learners, and the recording of learners' progress and achievement on non-accredited courses is not consistently good. In these areas, managers' plans for improvement are less well developed.

Safeguarding is effective.

The management team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and it takes effective action to safeguard learners. Staff know what to do should they have concerns about the safety and welfare of learners. Staff identify learners promptly who need additional support; they intervene swiftly, record safeguarding concerns clearly and inform managers appropriately. Managers and staff liaise effectively with other agencies such as adult social care to ensure that more vulnerable learners get the support and help that they need.

Managers are effectively implementing plans to prevent extremism and radicalisation. Training for staff is effectively building their ability to promote British values and take appropriate action should they be concerned about the radicalisation of learners. Managers have effective links with the local 'Prevent' coordinator and liaise well when they have concerns about learners. In sessions, learners from different backgrounds work well together and show respect for each other and for teachers. Learners feel safe at the providers' main site and in local community venues where learning takes place.

Inspection findings

- Managers effectively monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through thorough and accurate observations in classes. They have ensured that high standards in teaching are maintained and they have a good understanding of the quality of provision.
- Managers and staff undertake a good range of observations, including with peers, joint observations and learning walks. These provide ample evidence of the strengths of the provision and areas that require further improvement and help develop the skills of both observers and teachers well. For example, observers now place good attention on capturing evidence of learning and the progress of learners to inform their judgements.
- A specialist, small team of observers is well trained and experienced. A very rigorous moderation process ensures consistency in the quality of observation findings. Peer reviews with external partners ensure that the quality of observations is regularly reviewed.
- Managers accurately identify the development needs of teachers and use this information well to inform training and professional development opportunities.
- Senior leaders and managers have rightly identified the underperformance of a significant minority of learners on courses for English and mathematics and ESOL. Managers have a sound understanding of the reasons for underperformance and are undertaking well-conceived actions to increase the achievement rates of learners on these courses.
- Managers are implementing a range of measures to raise the achievement rates of learners in English, mathematics and ESOL. Staff are better assessing learners' abilities, and the advice they provide ensures that learners are on courses that best match their abilities. Staff provide extra support for those at risk of not successfully achieving their qualification, through additional small group-work activities. Managers have set challenging targets for individual teachers to improve their performance. Managers and teachers are successfully implementing strategies that are improving the attendance of learners but it is too early in the application of these strategies to judge whether they are fully effective.
- Managers have worked hard to ensure that they have a sufficient number of teaching staff to deliver a full mathematics curriculum. However, a staff vacancy is limiting the availability of classes to learners and sickness cover for other teachers when they are ill. Managers are aware of the risk this represents to learners achieving qualifications in this area.

- Learners on non-accredited programmes achieve their learning aims and personal goals well. Teachers plan learning well through developing clear schemes of work and lesson plans. They use information effectively to develop strategies that support individual learners well.
- All teachers record learners' progress and achievement on non-accredited courses. However, the recording is inconsistent and too variable across the range of provision. In a few cases, targets set by teachers are too broad and it is not easy for them to measure the progress that learners make. Targets do not fully identify the specific skills learners need to master in order to move on to the next stage of their learning. Teachers' recording does not always capture the progress that learners make in their personal and social development. Within the service, there is good practice in recording the progress of learners on which to build, for example where learners use diaries, journals, photographs and notes to evaluate and record their progress.
- Staff provide good advice and guidance that support learners' progress well. Clear information and pre-course guidance are easily accessible to learners. Staff use their initial assessment of learners well to direct them to courses that meet their ambitions and abilities.
- Where appropriate, almost all learners have clear, aspirational and carefully considered career plans. Managers and teachers support learners exceptionally well to realise their ambitions. Teachers and guest speakers provide highly effective guidance, support and challenge to help learners progress.
- Teachers direct learners effectively to other courses that help them plan for their next steps. For example, learners join employability courses that help them prepare curriculum vitae and make job applications. Others move on to further study options within the service or with other local further education providers
- Managers' well-established relationships with a range of partners, including the National Careers Service, local employment agencies and Jobcentre Plus (JCP), ensure that learners have good access to independent careers advice and guidance. Most learners who spoke to inspectors said that they felt they are being prepared well for their next steps in learning or employment. The progression of learners to employment is good, particularly so for those completing childcare courses.
- Managers have developed new courses and programmes with partners that are successfully attracting new learners, particularly those who aim to gain employment. With JCP, managers have developed courses to respond to the needs of residents in light of reforms to the welfare system. Well-considered new courses help residents manage their finances better and use the internet effectively in managing their day-to-day lives.
- While qualitative evidence shows that the provision does engage new learners, managers do not routinely analyse data and trends in the engagement of learners to help review and plan provision.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- prioritise the recruitment of a suitably qualified mathematics teacher so that the number of mathematics courses is increased
- routinely scrutinise plans to improve outcomes for learners taking basic qualifications in English, mathematics and ESOL to ensure that actions are fully effective
- review data regularly to ensure that new learners whom the service is targeting are participating in learning
- ensure that the recording and recognition of learners' progress and achievement are undertaken consistently well by all teachers.

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

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 head of service for ALSS as nominee. We met with you, senior leaders, managers, teachers and learners. We carried out lesson observations, and took account of the most recent self-assessment report and development plans and the previous inspection report. We used group and individual interviews and telephone calls 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.