

City Lit

Community learning and skills

Inspection dates

6–9 December 2016

Overall effectiveness		Good	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Adult learning programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding		
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Outstanding	

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- A very high proportion of learners make good progress with their learning, quickly developing confidence in their own ability to learn new skills to become independent learners.
- Learners develop very good technical, vocational and language skills that help them to find sustainable employment or to progress into higher levels of responsibility at work.
- Learners develop exceptional social and interpersonal skills that support their studies well and improve substantially the quality of their personal, family and community lives.
- The proportion of learners who achieve GCSE A* to C grades in English and mathematics is high.
- Excellent partnerships with local employers, community leaders and specialist organisations enable vulnerable learners to benefit from learning that enhances their lives and mental well-being.
- Teachers' feedback to learners is detailed and insightful, and comprehensively ensures that learners understand the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve further.
- Learners' behaviour in class and around the college is exemplary. Learners show great kindness and tolerance to their peers, visitors and teachers.
- Learners develop excellent skills for employment. Teachers relate learning very well to employment and commerce, and ensure that learners sustain or improve their skills in English and mathematics.
- Learners work is of an exceptionally high standard. Many exhibit and sell their work through galleries and retail outlets.
- A small proportion of teachers do not ensure that most-able learners develop new skills and knowledge or further develop their existing skills.
- The proportion of learners who achieve their qualification in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is not yet good. Teachers do not ensure that learners have sufficient opportunity in lessons to practise accurately their spoken English.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The City Literary Institute (City Lit), established in 1919, is a community learning provider with charitable status located in Covent Garden, and is one of five specialist designated institutions in London. City Lit is a national centre of excellence for learners who have a stammer, and holds the Queen's Anniversary Prize for outstanding work in speech therapy.
- Currently, City Lit is the largest provider of community learning in Europe, offering approximately 5,000 courses annually to 30,000 learners from across London. Just under half of its income is from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA.) Almost all learners are on programmes that are not qualification based, with a very small proportion following programmes in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) functional skills, GCSE English and mathematics, and programmes from level 1 to 3. From 2014 to 2016, City Lit offered apprenticeships in health and social care, and contributed to other providers' 16 to 19 study programmes. It no longer offers either provision.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate the minority of teaching, learning and assessment that is not of a high enough standard, and ensure that learners make good progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers agree more stretching targets for most-able learners that extend their skills and knowledge further
 - ensuring that learners on ESOL programmes have sufficient opportunity in lessons to practise accurately their spoken English
 - ensuring that teachers direct the work of learning assistants more closely and check the learning and understanding more thoroughly for those learners who require additional help with their studies.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Governors, leaders and managers ensure that City Lit retains its philosophy of providing a rich and broad curriculum to all those who wish to develop their skills and knowledge. Staff are committed to enabling learners with or without existing qualifications to pursue their ambitions, improve their employment opportunities and enhance further their life and mental well-being through their learning. Leaders and managers place a suitably high priority on learners improving their English and mathematics skills through their learning. The provision for learners who are deaf or who have a hearing loss, and for those professionals who wish to specialise in helping those with a hearing impairment, is very good.
- At the previous inspection, teaching, learning and assessment were good and they remain so. Leaders and managers have supported teachers to ensure that teaching is exciting and stimulates learners very effectively to learn new skills and techniques in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance and respect.
- Partnerships with employers, community leaders and specialist organisations are excellent. Leaders and managers use their partnerships very effectively to design a curriculum that provides very good first steps into learning for vulnerable learners, including those who have mental ill health concerns or learners who are refugees from war zones. They also use partnerships to provide specialist learning opportunities, for example an employer stammering network that helps learners to overcome those obstacles to learning and employment that they experience as a result of having a stammer.
- Financial management is strong. Generous financial help to pay for course fees and equipment enables learners, who would not afford to, to remain in learning and make good progress.
- The learning environment at City Lit is highly egalitarian. Leaders and managers have maintained a positive approach to learning and set high standards of behaviour from staff, learners and visitors so that learners from all social backgrounds, ages and ethnic groups learn and socialise well together.
- Leaders and managers listen to the views of learners carefully and incorporate these well in the ongoing improvements, both to the quality of learning and the breadth of courses offered. Learners value greatly the harmonious nature they encounter while they study, and develop great tolerance and respect for the views and value systems of their peers.
- Staff provide very good and impartial advice and guidance to ensure that learners enrol onto the correct course either at City Lit or elsewhere. Ongoing careers information benefits many learners who use the service to progress in their career or to help them change direction into new areas of employment.
- Leaders' and managers' assessment of learning and the quality of provision through their self-assessment of performance is good, and communication across the college is effective. Leaders and managers know the provision well, and staff at all levels contribute effectively to reviewing the quality of learning. Governors challenge and scrutinise the resulting evaluative report well.

- Managers' oversight of teaching, learning and assessment is thorough. The opportunities for staff to develop their teaching skills and knowledge are extensive and most teachers reflect well on their practice. Managers instigate small project-based evaluations to improve further any weaker aspects of teaching, learning and assessment that they identify. However, this has not yet eliminated the small proportion of teaching and learning that is not of a high enough standard, nor ensured that learners on ESOL programmes make good or better progress in their learning.

The governance of the provider

- Governors are highly skilled in their role and know the college well. They have a clear understanding of their obligations as governors and ensure that they monitor the actions of leaders and managers closely.
- Governors ensure that leaders and managers keep them well informed, and use their extensive experience of business, commerce and education to challenge the decisions of leaders and managers appropriately. Governors support leaders well to preserve and maintain the designated status of City Lit as a provider of high-quality education for London's adult learners.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Managers ensure that all statutory duties are complied with and that the appropriate recruitment and selection checks are strictly adhered to. Staff are clear that learners' safety is of paramount importance, and monitor learners' activities in class and in the central college areas carefully. Through the partnership arrangements that managers have in place with local authorities and other educational institutions, vulnerable learners and younger adults are protected appropriately and well.
- Leaders and managers meet their obligations under the 'Prevent' duty effectively. Governors and staff at all levels have been trained to identify any potential threat from those who hold extreme or radical views. Staff and learners know to whom they should report any potential incidents of extremism or radical behaviour. Learners feel very safe while at City Lit.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers use their specialist subject knowledge exceptionally well to enliven and enrich learning. They do this by the many examples they share with learners of their own professional practice, and by the suggestions they make to individual learners on how to improve their own work and skills further. Teachers are accomplished in creating a collaborative approach to learning where learners appraise their own and each other's work. Learners quickly become independent and are highly motivated to succeed.
- Learners understand well what they need to do to improve their work, skills and knowledge further, and many make very good progress. They receive detailed feedback on the standard and quality of their work. Teachers set frequent and regular homework and activities to extend learners' enjoyment and understanding of their subject.

- Learners develop and improve their English and mathematics skills. Teachers make it clear to learners how English and mathematics relate to the subjects they are studying. Learners in art learn how geometry is applied to 3D drawing and display, and much emphasis is placed on the timing and rhythm within a musical piece when performing. Teachers mark learners' written work and compositions carefully, and correct learners' grammar, sentence construction and punctuation assiduously.
- Teachers use a wide range of methods effectively to help learners understand how well they are progressing, for example video recording individual learners performing a dance movement and then comparing the learners' skills with those of a professional dancer performing the same movement. Teachers keep detailed records of the progress individual learners make, and supplement them well with photographs and other evidence that they share well with learners.
- Learners use technology effectively to improve their work and enhance their skills for employment. Many establish online learning communities with their fellow learners. Learners with no previous experience of technology and/or social media quickly become adept at using the internet to research and communicate with others. Learners understand well the potential risks from working online.
- Teachers do not always ensure that the most able and skilled learners extend their skills and knowledge further or acquire new skills and expertise. A few teachers are not sufficiently demanding when setting and agreeing personal learning targets. On occasion, teachers allow most-able learners to dominate class discussions at the expense of the quieter, more reflective learners or those with less experience or skills.
- In a few cases, teachers do not ensure that those learners who require more specific help in their lessons make good progress. A small minority of teachers do not provide sufficiently clear instructions to in-class learning assistants on how to help learners with the tasks and activities planned, or check that learners are able to complete their learning to a good standard.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

- Learners' self-confidence and self-esteem flourish as a result of studying at City Lit. Many learners who have no formal experience of learning gain the personal skills and poise to take their first steps towards gaining the qualifications they require to be successful in life. A high proportion of learners feel able to volunteer within their community, and use their language skills very well to help others succeed.
- Learners develop excellent skills for employment. Much teaching and learning is linked to the world of work and commerce. Teachers' strong focus on improving learners' skills in English and mathematics ensures that learners understand well the value of developing and maintaining these skills. Learners who are deaf develop very good skills in English that enable them to write a clear, well-structured, employment-focused curriculum vitae. Learners become confident and practised in using their mathematics skills, for example using statistics to justify a business marketing proposal, and apply these skills well when in the workplace, often gaining promotion as a result.

- Ongoing advice on all aspects of employment, volunteering and career planning is exceptionally good. For many learners, studying at City Lit is life changing. Well-qualified and knowledgeable careers staff help learners to explore and refine their career choices. A high proportion of learners become self-employed, retrain for alternative career pathways or achieve promotion at work.
- Learners' behaviour while at college and in their lessons is exemplary. Leaders, managers, teachers and learners show tolerance, respect and great kindness to each other. Learners have a very good appreciation of world views and what it means to be an effective member of a democratic society.
- Learners enjoy their learning and take part enthusiastically in evaluating and critiquing their own and each other's work. The extensive debate and discussion encouraged by teachers ensures that learners develop an exceptional understanding of their subject and a thirst for learning. Learners incorporate their own experiences of life from within their communities or working lives well into their studies, and this adds to the richness of the learning experience very effectively.
- The standard of learners' work is extremely high. Learners are encouraged to exhibit and sell their work through galleries and local retail outlets, and many choose to do so. Learners are rightly proud of their work and the good standard of skills and knowledge they acquire.
- Learners benefit from exceptionally high levels of personal care from staff and have good opportunities to eat healthily while at college. They enjoy the healthy, nutritious inexpensive food from the on-site café. Many learners come into college outside their scheduled lessons to make use of the high-quality learning resources available to them, to seek specialist advice on their studies or to use the specialist software available for learners with a disability.
- Learners feel and are very safe when studying at City Lit. The very many learners who are vulnerable, or who have fragile physical or mental ill health, are helped very well to participate in learning and to enjoy the social areas of the college fully. Managers and teachers ensure that learners know to whom they should take any concerns they may have.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Most learners are not taking courses that lead to formal qualifications but are on programmes that match their interests, hobbies and aspirations. Once re-engaged in education and training, the majority of learners continue to study and many eventually progress onto higher-level courses at university, medical school or prestigious art and drama establishments.
- Learners improve their vocational and technical skills very effectively, which benefits them greatly. For example, learners gain promotion at work, enhance their employment opportunities or retrain for a different career as a result of studying at City Lit. Teachers, especially those in creative and performing arts, prepare learners well for self-employment.

- Learners develop very good skills that are useful to them both in their learning and in their everyday lives. For example, learners on art courses develop good project-management skills through preparing and organising exhibitions of their work, and learners of photography are able to risk assess accurately the potential dangers of using chemicals to develop their pictures. Learners recognise how the skills they learn in class enhance many other aspects of their social and community lives.
- The proportion of learners who achieve GCSE A* to C qualifications in English and mathematics is high. Most learners complete their course successfully. However, the very few learners who are working towards English and mathematics functional skills qualifications do not achieve well.
- The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications in ESOL, while improving, is not yet good. Too few learners gain speaking and listening skills of a high standard because teachers do not provide sufficient opportunity for learners to practise their spoken English accurately in lessons.
- Little difference exists between the achievement of learners of different ages or ethnicity. However, those learners who have a declared disability do not achieve as well as their peers.
- The achievement of the few learners who completed apprenticeship programmes in health and social care in 2016 work was low. Too few learners completed their apprenticeship in the time planned or progressed to higher apprenticeship programmes. Managers recognised that staff did not have the skills or expertise to provide these programmes to a good standard and, as such, no longer offer apprenticeships.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130401
Type of provider	Community learning and skills
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	26,590
Principal/CEO	Mark Malcomson
Telephone number	020 7242 9872
Website	www.citlit.ac.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 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	57	13,053	2	339	-	180	-	121
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant principal, 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 relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

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