

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Heather Blevins
Head of Service
Coventry City Council Adult Education Service
Southfields Old School
South Street
Coventry
CV1 5EJ

Dear Ms Blevins

Short inspection of Coventry City Council Adult Education Service

Following the short inspection on 8 and 9 March 2017, 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 November 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection, Coventry City Council Adult Education Service has undergone significant changes. Senior managers in the local authority made a highly effective strategic alliance with their counterparts in the neighbouring Warwickshire County Council to put the service on a firmer footing by appointing a joint head of service. This has resulted in cost savings, joint planning of service and sharing of good practice across both services. Senior leaders and those in governance roles have enabled the head of service to secure funds from other sources, such as the European Social Fund and the Department for Communities and Local Government, to work with particular groups to complement the work of the service and extend its reach to other targeted groups in the community. This helped senior managers to mitigate the substantial reduction in funding allocation and the sudden loss of the Jobcentre Plus contract for the provision of foundation English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

In addition, senior managers in the governance role have established new provision types successfully. By using their influence and building on the expertise of the staff from across the whole range of services, they have established a successful apprenticeship programme. This has helped the local authority to fill vacancies in schools and other departments by recruiting and training apprentices in roles such as classroom assistants, early years childcare, customer services and business administration.

To fulfil their corporate parenting responsibility, senior managers have established a highly effective and customised study programme and traineeship for learners who are care leavers, children looked after, those who are not in education, employment or training and those who have missed school for a variety of reasons. This has made a significant difference to the future prospects of these young people, who engage fully in learning, improve their confidence and progress to either jobs, apprenticeships or other substantial learning programmes at the local colleges.

During the period of substantial changes, you and your team have successfully maintained the strengths and improved most of the weaker aspects of the provision identified at the previous inspection. A much higher percentage of your tutors confidently deliver good-quality teaching, learning and assessment, using a wide range of teaching methods effectively. Most learners stay on courses, progress well and achieve their learning objectives or qualifications. The number of learners on non-accredited community learning classes has declined, although more stay on their programmes now. Although tutors make better use of the findings of initial assessment of learners' starting points to plan for learners' individual needs, this weakness has not been fully dealt with. Managers collect a broad range of data and use it successfully to make improvements, such as in monitoring attendance and punctuality and improving staying-on rates at programme and centre level. You and your managers collect data on enrolments and learners and use percentages to make comparisons with performance in previous years in terms of overall numbers of learners. This does not give an accurate account of the performance by individual learners and the progress they have made against various levels, such as entry levels 1, 2 or 3.

You have further strengthened partnerships with various agencies and the voluntary sector. This has resulted in learners from targeted wards and neighbourhoods, 67% of whom are from minority ethnic groups, to easily access learning at times and locations that are convenient to them. You continue to attract a good proportion of new learners into learning to meet their personal, social, employment, educational or health needs. Learners attend classes regularly to improve their skills and knowledge and gain qualifications. This improves their chances of securing employment, integrating better in their local communities and leading more fulfilling lives.

Curriculum planning is highly responsive to meeting the needs of the local community. For example, curriculum leaders established an intensive 16-week GCSE mathematics course starting in January that enables learners who need the GCSE to start their substantive learning programme in September, rather than having to wait another year. Unaccompanied young people from Coventry and the surrounding areas access ESOL provision that is delivered in response to requests from social services and the local authority. Programmes for Syrian refugees to help them integrate into society by improving their language are particularly effective.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and managers have established a strong culture of safeguarding. They conduct regular checks on the suitability of staff to work with learners and keep them abreast of the developments in safeguarding topics. Learners enjoy learning in safe places and they are well aware of online safety and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities develop a good understanding of safe working practices, handling hot and sharp implements safely during card-making and catering activities.

Learners feel safe. Knowledgeable tutors reinforce the message of safeguarding well by integrating these topics into lessons. Learners have a good understanding of how to protect themselves from risk and who to contact if they need to, often referring to contact numbers issued to them during their induction. However, apprentices' understanding of and ability to explain how to keep themselves safe from the threat of radicalisation and extremism are less well developed than those of learners on other programmes.

Staff and learners are respectful of each other. A culture of respect and tolerance is evident throughout the service. Tutors make excellent use of a poem about the British by Benjamin Zephaniah to raise awareness of diverse cultures in Britain and reinforce among learners the fundamental British values of democracy, tolerance and respect.

Inspection findings

- Governance arrangements, which were good at the previous inspection, have been further enhanced. This has enabled the managers to identify gaps in provision and establish required programmes, such as apprenticeships and study programmes, and to secure funds for various projects. The head of service is now part of the senior management of the local authority education team. The service is now fully integrated into the local authority structures and is seen as a key provider of lifelong learning to Coventry residents. The elected member responsible for adult community learning and the director of education provide extensive support and conduct regular supervision of the head of service. The joint governance arrangements with Warwickshire are working very well, as is the strategic ongoing work towards establishing the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- Managers at all levels have sharpened their focus on quality improvement. They manage the performance of tutors well, through regular lesson observations and focused learning walks. They support relatively new tutors or tutors who need help to deliver good learning, through a team of coaches and mentors and by the sharing of good practice. Inspectors agreed with the findings of the observers. While the observers focus on learning, they do not examine the relationship of teaching and learning to outcomes sufficiently. For example, managers claim that 97% of teaching and learning are good or better. However, this is not reflected in the outcomes for learners being of a consistently high standard. Managers have recognised this and have revised

their plans for observing tutors by placing the responsibility on tutors to improve their professional skills and quality of classroom practice, and supporting them through coaches and mentors.

- Tutors plan lessons well and make good use of learning resources, including the virtual learning environment. They make learning fun for learners, making good use of relevant topics and contexts that capture the interests of learners. For example, in Spanish, learners learn about Spanish food types and quantities. They then practise their skills as they role-play a market place, becoming vendors and customers selling and buying food. Many tutors challenge learners to excel at their learning and achieve higher-level outcomes. For example, a mother and daughter learning on a flower arranging programme were given highly effective coaching to set up a business. Learners make good progress in lessons.
- The quality of target-setting in learning plans is not consistently good. This area for improvement since the previous inspection is not fully resolved. While the large majority of targets are good, many lack small steps for learners to work through and measure their progress against to help them achieve their longer-term goals. For example, learners on supporting teaching and learning in schools (STLS) programmes are set targets that require them to complete whole units or very large tasks, such as reading the National Curriculum. This target is too large and vague and does not set out the purpose or detail of what the learners should focus upon. There is insufficient short-term target-setting to help learners progress more rapidly in achieving their learning goals.
- Learners complete a useful journal or learning plan to review their ongoing progress on a weekly basis. However, these focus too much on what they have done in lessons, rather than the learning and skills developed. Tutors do not enable learners to evaluate and review their progress on a termly basis to revise or set new targets. Furthermore, they do not plan for or routinely set personal targets for learners' stated objectives. For example, a few learners on ESOL programmes had learning objectives such as to help their children with homework and communicate effectively with their doctors. This hinders learners from developing greater levels of confidence and skills. Long-term targets for a few ESOL learners who have high-level qualifications from their countries of origin, such as teaching and accountancy, are not set. Such learners are not challenged sufficiently to make greater progress and enter professions.
- The qualification achievement rates for learners on English and ESOL programmes remain high. These account for 66% of the total accredited provision and are key priority areas for the service. In the other most significant subject areas, such as children and young people's workforce, STLS and information and communication technology, learners' achievement of qualifications remains high. Progression between levels of programmes or to appropriate complementary additional programmes is positive and a large percentage of learners progress through levels. Progression of learners through entry levels in English and ESOL is good, although the number of learners progressing to level 1 and to level 2 in these subjects is low. The number of learners staying on GCSE English programmes has declined and is low.

- The number of learners undertaking mathematics courses has declined. Fewer learners stay on the programmes and their rates of achievement of qualifications are also low.
- Most apprentices achieve their qualification in the planned period and develop a good range of vocational skills. They work well alongside their experienced colleagues, undertaking roles such as delivering presentations in meetings and managing a full caseload of children in nursery settings. Their confidence levels develop rapidly and they become valuable members of their teams, contributing well to their employers' businesses. Their progress on their programmes and progression to higher levels of qualifications are good.
- Learners on community learning programmes achieve their learning objectives well. They gain a range of new skills, for example in flower arranging and interests such as papercraft for making greetings cards. The standard of work is high and good enough to sell in shops. This develops learners' awareness of commercial opportunities and prepares them well for employment. They become confident citizens and socially adept and those on parenting courses are better able to manage their children's behaviour. A good number of learners undertake voluntary opportunities that prepare them well for employment.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the vast range of available data is analysed and used efficiently to produce an accurate account of individual learners' performance and their progression through various levels; they should use the findings to provide a more accurate view of the provision in the self-assessment report and take steps to improve services further
- a greater number of learners are enrolled on mathematics programmes stay on their programmes, make good progress and achieve their qualifications
- the number and proportion of learners on community learning programmes increase by extending the range and types of provision to meet the demands of learners
- all tutors use the findings of initial assessment diligently while planning their classes to set individual, specific, time-bound, challenging and realistic targets that enable learners to progress rapidly through their learning, according to their capability
- tutors work closely with learners to evaluate their learning in periodic progress reviews, so that they stay motivated and make excellent progress.

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

Harmesh Manghra
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the team was assisted by you as the head of service and nominee. We held meetings with you, the director of education, the portfolio holder for adult learning, curriculum managers, teaching staff, apprentices and learners. We visited 37 classes, observing a range of accredited and non-accredited learning in 21 different subjects in six centres, including three joint lesson observations. Inspectors spoke to learners and apprentices, examined their learning plans and journals and scrutinised their marked work, including e-portfolios. We reviewed key documents, including those relating to safeguarding, the self-assessment report, the quality improvement plan and observations of teaching, learning and assessment. We considered the views of learners and employers and reviewed the comments received on Ofsted's online questionnaires.