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Ms Julie Rushton
Head of Manchester Adult Education Service
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Dear Ms Rushton

Short inspection of Manchester Adult Education Service

Following the short inspection on 27 and 28 February 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 Manchester Adult Education Service was judged to be good in October 2013.

This provider is good.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and senior managers have reviewed, developed and shaped their provision well. Leaders have ensured that learners are well prepared to benefit from social and economic developments and employment opportunities in Manchester. The delivery of first-step courses has significantly improved the prospects of learners with low qualifications, those who are recent arrivals to the UK with little knowledge of English language and those learners with significant personal barriers to employment. Your partnership work with a wide range of organisations, such as Jobcentre Plus, is highly effective. This work has allowed you to engage many hard-to-reach learners and help them to make steps towards gaining employment.

You ensure that most learners make good progress on accredited courses and on those courses without a formal qualification. However, the proportion who are successful on functional skills courses in English and mathematics at level 2 is low. Learners do, however, improve a range of personal and employability skills, for example by helping each other to solve problems and by having a positive attitude to learning and self-development.

Leaders and managers have good capacity to improve the provision further. For example, you and your managers have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching, learning and assessment. This has led you to implement an improvement plan that focuses on a wide range of staff development activities to improve learning. However, as you acknowledge, a small minority of tutors still need to improve teaching and assessment practices. On courses that do not have

formal qualifications, tutors do not yet set learners clear targets to support their learning and tutors do not routinely assess learners' achievements accurately. As a result, learners on a minority of non-accredited courses do not have a secure knowledge of their achievements. The quality of feedback that learners receive about their work does not help them to produce work routinely of the standard of which they are capable.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements continue to be comprehensive and effective. You and your managers have reviewed fully the service's safeguarding policies and updated them in line with those of Manchester Council to reduce safety risks to learners. The records of safeguarding incidents are maintained well and are detailed; they indicate clearly that your staff have dealt with any raised issues appropriately.

All tutors have received relevant and regular training on keeping learners safe and their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty. Most tutors discuss these issues skilfully and confidently with learners and help them to apply their understanding, for example, through discussing current affairs. As a result, learners have a good understanding of the risks of involvement with radical ideologies and how holding British values reduces the dangers of extremism. Learners know how to report any concerns and are certain that your staff take their concerns seriously and respond appropriately. They have a good awareness of staying safe while using the internet.

Inspection findings

- You and your managers have ensured that the provision the service offers is aligned fully with Manchester Council's development plans and priorities, including 'Manchester Work and Skills Strategy 2016–21'. As a result, courses focus sharply on enhancing both learners' and their dependants' prospects to gain employment. Courses also help learners to improve their skills for current employment and help to build stronger communities. The provision enables learners to develop or refine their existing skills to those that employers seek, or to gain qualifications. Learners recognise the benefits that they gain from attending courses regularly. They also value those courses that help them to gain experience as volunteers because it affords them a route into employment. Adults with learning disabilities improve their independence by attending specific courses devised for them. Courses for speakers of other languages help learners to integrate more fully into their communities. Many learners attend courses to improve their skills in English, mathematics and in the use of computers.
- Since the previous inspection, you have developed secure arrangements to monitor and evaluate the benefits that learners gain from your provision. You are effective in collecting and monitoring data and information about learners' progression to employment and further training. Managers use this information well to improve their provision. For example, last year, managers developed courses that encouraged around a fifth more learners to return to learning in the service, compared to the previous year. The large majority of these learners started on courses one level higher.
- You and your managers have developed further the quality improvement arrangements for the service, including the process to evaluate tutors' assessment

of learners' achievements on courses that do not lead to formal qualifications. Managers now check regularly a sample of learners' complete achievement records. In most cases, they identify accurately and effectively challenge tutors who have not robustly assessed learners' achievements. Managers agree an action plan to secure improvement. Most managers monitor the quality of lessons effectively through observations and 'learning walks'. Managers use the results of their findings well to agree the required actions for improvement with their tutors. However, until recently, observers have not paid sufficient attention to the quality of tutors' target-setting and ongoing assessments during lessons. Consequently, teaching and assessment practices of a minority of tutors have not improved and learners taught by these tutors do not benefit sufficiently from their lessons.

- Most tutors have a good knowledge of learners' starting points and their barriers to learning. They use this information effectively to set clear individual learning targets that extend learners' skills and knowledge, for example learners' ability to analyse the use of adjectives in sentences. The majority of tutors regularly review and record individual learners' achievements, for example learners' competency in planning work as teaching assistants. These tutors check skilfully individual learners' understanding of topics through effective questioning and assess accurately learners' progress towards their targets. They successfully encourage learners, including the most able learners, to take part in lesson activities, for example explaining the role of volunteers in communities. Tutors' feedback on learners' work, however, including identifying mistakes and wrong spellings, requires further improvement.
- A minority of tutors, however, do not set clear learning targets to extend learners' skills and knowledge. As a result, these learners do not achieve their full potential. Most tutors have high expectations of learners and expect them to produce high-quality work. They also require learners to keep their work tidy and well organised. However, a small minority of tutors do not encourage their learners to keep their work well organised. This can have a negative effect on learners' progress.
- Last year, a good proportion of learners on non-accredited courses, which comprised around three quarters of the provision, achieved their personal goals and the aims of their courses. During the same year, the large majority of learners on accredited courses achieved their qualifications. However, the proportion of learners who were successful on functional skills courses in English and mathematics level 2 required improvement. Following an analysis of the reasons for the low performance of learners on these courses, managers have made a number of changes, such as increasing the length of these courses, to improve learners' outcomes. Although it is too early to evaluate the impact of the changes, there is evidence that current learners on these courses are making the expected progress towards completing successfully.
- A good proportion of learners move on to employment, further courses or to other positive destinations. Last year, around half of learners who completed courses in the previous year started on a higher-level course offered by the service. A good proportion of learners who did not return to the service for further learning gained jobs or started courses with other providers. Around a third of learners on family learning programmes moved on to courses to improve their vocational or English

skills.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of learners who are successful in their functional skills courses in English and mathematics level 2 improves, so that learners are even better prepared to move on to employment or further education
- managers continue to implement their improvement plan robustly, so that the assessment practices of a minority of tutors improves swiftly
- tutors set sufficiently detailed and clear learning targets that extend learners' skills and knowledge well, so they are even better prepared to move on to jobs, further courses and contribute to their communities
- tutors set high expectations for all learners to keep their work well organised, so that learners can easily refer to their work and review what they have learned
- tutors provide learners with clear feedback on their work, so that they know how to improve and achieve their potential.

I am copying this letter to the Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Shahram Safavi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection inspectors were assisted by the area adult education manager, as the nominee. We met staff at all levels and observed lessons with your managers. Additionally, we also undertook a review of learners' work and we interviewed your learners. Furthermore, we reviewed key documents, including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of learners by reviewing the comments received on Ofsted's online questionnaires, and by seeking their views during the inspection.