

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



17 July 2017

Mark Homer
Head of Service
Derbyshire Adult Community Education Service
Block B
Chatsworth Hall
Chesterfield Road
Matlock
DE4 3FW

Dear Mark Homer

Short inspection of Derbyshire Adult Community Education Service

Following the short inspection on 21 and 22 June 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 May 2012.

This provider continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection, you and your managers have successfully shifted the focus of your service from one based on universal access to a much more targeted approach, based on meeting the needs of the more vulnerable and socially disadvantaged members of communities across the county. You have achieved this while continuing to offer a wide range of courses to learners who are willing to pay non-subsidised fees, so retaining access to adult learning in all parts of your large and socially diverse county.

You have established effective governance arrangements since the previous inspection through your new board, to drive forward and oversee changes to the strategic direction of the service. These arrangements have enabled you to strengthen the accountability of you and your managers for the performance of the service. You have brought in external partners to help you design and develop new provision, such as your study programmes and the innovative work that you do around mental health issues.

You and your managers have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of your provision, gained through your self-critical and highly evaluative self-assessment process. Your staff use accurate and timely data well to identify and tackle emerging areas for improvement, such as the low retention rates for adult learners on courses that lead to qualifications.

A real strength of your service is the way that you and your managers work with partner organisations to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of both employers and those working with the most vulnerable groups in your communities. You have established a number of work-based academies in health and social care, and in construction, to prepare unemployed residents for job interviews in these sectors; many of these progress into employment. You have designed your study programmes to fill the gaps left by local colleges and to recruit young people who have been in care or have not thrived in conventional educational environments. You have succeeded in becoming an approved provider to deliver apprenticeships for the local authority under the new levy arrangements. As a result you have the opportunity to grow your small apprenticeship programme.

You and your management team have been largely effective in tackling the main areas for improvement found at the previous inspection, but a few areas still need further work, and some new areas have emerged that need to be addressed.

Safeguarding is effective.

Managers and teachers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective and they take appropriate actions to safeguard learners. As a result, learners report that they feel safe while attending courses in centres and at the many outreach venues in this large, rural county.

Managers use the resources and expertise of the local authority's human resources department to ensure that they follow the right procedures for the safe recruitment of staff. Once recruited, staff receive a thorough induction in safeguarding, including in how to identify any learners at risk of radicalisation and extremism. Almost all staff have completed online and face-to-face training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. As a result, they have been able to refer learners appropriately through the 'Channel' process.

Staff and learners know how and to whom they should report any safeguarding concerns. The designated safeguarding officer keeps a detailed central log of incidents, and works well with colleagues in adult and children's social care to support learners at risk. Staff ensure that learners know how to stay safe online. Managers carry out effective risk assessments on all outreach venues before courses start.

Although all records of staff completing mandatory safeguarding training are accurate and up-to-date, managers did not have ready access to these at the time of inspection. As a result, they could not provide information on completion rates quickly and effectively.

Inspection findings

- The proportion of adult learners who completed their qualifications has declined in the last few years, and was well below the rate for similar providers in 2015/16. The decline in course completion was particularly marked among

learners taking English and mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) qualifications. Managers carried out a prompt and thorough analysis of the causes for the decline and took effective action to address them. As a result, the proportion of learners remaining on their qualifications has increased this year to the same level as that of similar providers, with a good rate of increase on courses leading to English and mathematics functional skills qualifications. Managers have also succeeded in improving the proportion of learners completing study programmes and community learning programmes, which have both seen increases within the current year.

- Immediately after the previous inspection, managers responded to the lack of challenge for learners on the large community learning programme by raising the threshold for calculating whether a learner had achieved from 60% to 80% of their learning objectives. Teachers are now skilled at setting challenging, but realistic, targets for learners based on an individual assessment of each learner's starting point. Managers use a range of effective practices, such as walk-through observations, to moderate the quality of the teachers' and learners' files. As a result, the process for recording the progress of learners on community learning courses supports the very high achievement rates reported by managers.
- Managers have been effective in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the last inspection. Teachers are now better at using the findings of initial assessment to establish the starting points of their learners to plan their courses to accommodate the needs of learners of different abilities. For example, in a community learning yoga class, exercises were adapted for each learner's level of experience and medical history to improve their posture and flexibility. Teachers give learners useful verbal feedback on community learning courses, and both verbal and written feedback on qualification courses, that helps them understand what it is they need to improve. As a result, learners develop good practical skills and produce work to a high standard. On qualification courses, teachers do not highlight basic spelling and grammar errors in their learners' work sufficiently, nor provide them with the strategies to improve their writing skills. Teachers are now more confident in the way that they introduce the themes of equality and diversity into their teaching and assessment. However, they are less confident in promoting discussions about British values, with the result that learners are unclear what these values mean.
- Managers have successfully established study programmes since the previous inspection, designed specifically to meet the needs of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs). The provision complies with the principles and requirements for this type of programme. Learners take vocational qualifications based on their career aspirations in subjects such as art and design, and health and social care. They are all following English and mathematics qualifications at levels based on rigorous initial assessment, with the opportunity to progress from functional skills qualifications to GCSE. Learners develop well appropriate skills for employment through internal supported placements that prepare them for when they go on work experience with external employers. Information, advice and guidance provide learners with an impartial view of their potential next steps. Although teachers have planned external work placements for each young person who is ready for one, not all those who are eligible have

yet taken up their place.

- Managers identified poor attendance, particularly among adults taking qualifications in English and mathematics and ICT, in the self-assessment report as an area for improvement. Despite having good systems in place for monitoring attendance, and the introduction of strategies to support learners at risk of non-attendance, the proportion of learners attending classes in these subjects has not improved in the current year. The result is that the minority of learners who do not attend regularly do not make good progress towards the achievement of their qualifications or the development of their skills.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- managers are able to retrieve and analyse information on the safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training of their staff quickly and efficiently
- teachers identify errors in the spelling and grammar in their learners' written work sufficiently, and provide them with the means to avoid repeating them
- managers provide teachers with the training and resources to enable them to promote British values more confidently with their learners
- the remaining eligible learners on study programmes take up their external work placements before the programme ends
- managers continue to focus on increasing learners' attendance, particularly in English and mathematics and ICT, as a matter of priority.

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

Dr Charles Searle
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors were assisted by the learning and skills manager as nominee. They held meetings with a range of managers, tutors, assessors, learners and employers. Inspectors carried out observations of teaching, learning and assessment, and conducted walk-through observations of courses to explore particular themes. They scrutinised learners' work and assessment records and key documents relating to the provider's strategy and implementation plans, self-assessment and improvement plans, and safeguarding records. Inspectors considered the views of learners through discussions during learning sessions visited and through responses received through Ofsted's online questionnaire.