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Mrs Jaki Bradley
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Richmond Road
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Dear Mrs Bradley

Short inspection of Thurrock Adult Community College

Following the short inspection on 7 and 8 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 provision was judged to be good in February 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection, you and your team, supported by a committed board of governors, have maintained your focus on high-quality teaching and learning. You continue to provide a good range of activities and courses to deliver confidence-building, family learning and access to employment to meet the development needs of the most vulnerable people in your community. You have further developed close working with the local authority and their social support agencies, and with employers to provide purposeful pre-employment training to help people get into work. You continue to provide very good opportunities and raise the aspirations of people of all ages across the Borough of Thurrock.

Focused management activities have ensured that you and your team have rectified the small number of areas for development identified in the previous inspection report and consolidated them into strengths of the provision. This purposeful robust performance management, together with frequent meetings with staff, have ensured that you have maintained good teaching and learning; as a result, a very high proportion of learners on accredited and non-accredited courses successfully complete their training programmes.

Current learners make good progress and the pattern of high achievement in recent years is supported by your current in-year data. Your staff clearly know and understand the learners well and help them to achieve, improving their life chances and raising their career expectations.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, managers and the board of governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. All staff and governors have received training in safeguarding and are aware of how to manage and deal with safeguarding concerns. Your learners are well informed and sufficiently confident in the staff to report any safeguarding concerns.

Records of concerns raised are appropriately detailed. They provide a clear picture of the concerns and detail any interventions by staff to deal with problems. The designated safeguarding officers work productively with relevant external local agencies across the borough and use these links well to support the most vulnerable learners and their families.

Your designated safeguarding officers and all staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Learners are aware of the dangers of being influenced by others with radical or extremist views; they trust their tutors and are confident to share their concerns. They understand that bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour are not tolerated or acceptable in the training environment and in their everyday lives.

Managers pay appropriate attention to health and safety and ensure that relevant safeguarding procedures are in place at all venues. Learners spoke positively to inspectors during the short inspection visit, demonstrating a good understanding of staying safe, the importance of British values and the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.

Learners recognise the importance of British values and appreciate the impact of respect for diversity in their learning and their community. For example in a GCSE English session, learners discussed the implications of not voting in the general election and the impact that could have on changing the way that the community and the country are administered. Most learners were able to describe measures to keep themselves safe and report concerns.

Inspection findings

- Overall, learners make good progress in achieving accredited qualifications and in completing non-accredited courses and training. They are eager and enthusiastic to learn, with most learners arriving well before the start of their sessions. Learners grow in confidence as they learn new knowledge and skills, develop wider social skills and make new contacts in the college and the community. Most tutors adeptly plan an appropriate range of learning tasks and activities that motivate learners to learn and improve their understanding, knowledge and skills very well. Tutors are skilled at asking questions to check and challenge learners' understanding and to extend their learning. Tutors provide focused verbal and written feedback to learners that provides appropriate challenge to improve their knowledge and develop their skills. Where gaps in learners' knowledge exist, tutors provide effective guidance and use well-directed discussion to help develop

their understanding. Tutors are generally confident and focus successfully on helping learners achieve and reach their full potential.

- Leaders and managers have improved their observations of tutors' practice since the previous inspection. The reports focus appropriately on the quality of learners' work, the skills they develop and progress they make. They identify what the tutor needs to do to improve and provide realistic actions for improvement. Tutors receive immediate verbal feedback from their observer; however, in a minority of instances formal written feedback takes too long to get to tutors and their managers. As a result, a minority of tutors are not swiftly supported to improve their teaching practice and provide better outcomes for learners. Observers receive pertinent developmental feedback from members of a standardisation group who moderate all observation reports.
- Learners value the impartial information, advice and guidance they receive before and at the start of their courses which help most to understand how they can succeed and progress. Tutors facilitate learners to identify and record targets for their learning and recognise what success may look like as they develop their personal learning plans. On the short and one-day non-accredited training this helps learners to identify the skills they have developed and the progress they have made. However, tutors do not make sure that learners on the personal development courses with the Prince's Trust and the 'my-internship programme' recognise the broader transferable skills that they have developed. As a consequence, some learners do not make or recognise the progress they have made or are capable of attaining.
- Leaders plan the provision based on an accurate assessment of the needs of the community. Since the previous inspection, they have placed greater emphasis on providing skills training to meet the needs of local employers and enable local unemployed people to secure work. The broad range of provision provides learners with pathways to progress from confidence-building introductory short courses and family learning to studying courses at GCSE level. Leaders ensure that courses are provided across a broad range of venues across the borough; effective working with employers, the local authority and other external agencies ensures that courses and events are offered in accessible, secure locations that specifically target groups of learners with skills gaps. Learners appreciate their learning and the opportunities that are afforded to them.
- Since the previous inspection, the board of governors has improved its level of support and challenge of leaders and managers. The board now receive pertinent information about the performance of staff and learners, from which they challenge leaders and managers. Additional members have joined the board of governors, strengthening the board's collective understanding of social inclusion, local employment and setting up social enterprise businesses.
- Tutors and learners receive appropriate training about the 'Prevent' duty. Tutors discuss incidents that appear in the media to stimulate and inform learners. Learners improve their understanding of aspects of life that they knew little about, such as homophobia and people trafficking. However, some tutors lack the depth of understanding and confidence to challenge the entrenched or prejudicial views held by some learners.

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced a new virtual learning environment (VLE). Learners studying information technology, business courses and the GCSE courses in mathematics and English benefit from accessing learning resources at home for independent learning. However, too few tutors are confident enough to provide learners with learning information on the VLE, and as a result, learning materials are not available to learners outside the classroom.
- Learners have good access to computers, laptops, smartphones and interactive display boards in the training rooms in the college. Tutors in many sessions make purposeful use of interactive pen-boards to display computer-generated materials that engage all learners, with information presented in a variety of ways. However, the connection to the VLE and internet is very slow, and as a consequence accessing training materials and research on the internet is severely inhibited, slowing down learning in class. For example, learners in a child care lesson spent a large proportion of the lesson waiting for their research presentations to load onto the system, reducing the time available for discussion and planned activities. Although learners receive useful information at induction on the safe use of computers, there was no information to reinforce learners' behaviours of logging off publicly accessible computers in the internet-accessible rooms across the college.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- tutors are supported to give them the additional confidence to challenge and extend discussion with learners on the wider aspects of the 'Prevent' duty
- learners and tutors benefit from fast access to the internet and VLE areas of the college to enable them to access learning materials and learning information in a timely manner
- verbal feedback following an observation of teaching and learning is quickly followed up with feedback to tutors to make sure that improvement action plans are put in place to swiftly enable tutors to provide better teaching and learning
- learners on all programmes create focused individual learning plans that effectively identify then record the transferable skills that learners develop
- information to reinforce learners' understanding of the appropriate use of the internet and how to log off public computers is displayed in all areas where learners can access the internet.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors, accompanied by one Ofsted inspector, visited Thurrock Adult Community College for two days. The deputy principal, as nominee, assisted inspectors. We met with the principal, members of the board of governors, various managers and curriculum managers, tutors and a range of learners. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment, and reviewed learners' written work. We reviewed key policies and documentation, including those relating to self-assessment, safeguarding, performance, learner achievement and progression.