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Mr Patrick Wilson  
Head of Service  
Hartlepool Adult Education  
Hartlepool Borough Council  
6–8 Tower Street  
Hartlepool  
TS24 7HD

Dear Mr Wilson

### **Short inspection of Hartlepool Borough Council**

Following the short inspection on 22–23 November 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 January 2014.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

Hartlepool Adult Education continues to prioritise its delivery and service on communities and groups with the most need. Leaders and managers target communities very effectively to maximise the impact of their programmes on improving the skills that are needed locally. This gives many unemployed individuals the opportunity to gain sustained employment, in many cases for the first time.

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have improved the achievement of adult learners on courses leading to qualifications. The achievement rates are now in line with those of similar providers, but need to improve further in a few subject areas. The proportion of apprentices who complete their programmes within the planned time improved significantly last year and is now good. Achievement on community learning courses and among learners with high needs are excellent.

A high proportion of learners from both the adult skills and community learning programmes progress either to work or to further full-time education on completion of their programme.

#### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and managers have ensured that safeguarding arrangements continue to be fit for purpose and that they take appropriate action to safeguard learners and staff. Their adherence to stringent policies and procedures ensure that they meet all statutory requirements fully. All staff complete mandatory level 2 safeguarding

training and update this on an annual basis. Staff recruitment includes rigorous checking of an applicant's identity, right to work, qualifications and references. Managers check all staff and volunteers with the Disclosure and Barring Service before commencing any activity, and repeat the checks every three years. Managers apply a lone working policy to ensure that staff who work in isolation take effective precautions to inform colleagues or managers of their travel plans and locations.

Named safeguarding officers and their contact details are widely promoted to all learners who know whom to contact and where officers are based if they have any worries or concerns. Staff respond quickly and effectively if any concern is raised. Managers and staff take appropriate actions to promote online safety to learners.

Leaders and managers have responded appropriately to the introduction of the 'Prevent' duty, and an appropriate risk assessment and action plan are in place. Staff have received training and are increasingly confident in including relevant topics in their classes and in discussions with learners. The classrooms and corridors contain many examples of effective posters and notices promoting, informing and reminding learners about the risks of radicalisation and extremism. As a result, learners increase their understanding of these risks.

Although managers require subcontractors to meet all statutory safeguarding requirements, the contract does not specify any requirement for staff training and updating.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders and managers closely monitor and analyse data on learners' achievements and the outcomes of teaching and learning observations. This enables them to identify quickly any aspects of provision that are underperforming, and to formulate clear and relevant actions to improve the provision.
- Effective procedures are in place to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning, with a clear focus on developing tutors' skills through relevant training. Leaders play an active role in improving teaching and learning. They closely monitor the individual progress of tutors through attending feedback meetings following lesson observations, engaging in monthly management meetings and attending individual staff performance reviews.
- Tutors receive appropriate and timely support and guidance to improve their practice further. This has led to consistent improvements in teaching and learning and improved outcomes for learners. The teaching and learning team undertakes a rigorous analysis of observation information to identify key areas for improvement. This information is used to identify relevant and regular staff training throughout the academic year, including activities on the development of learners' English and mathematics skills in lessons, and hints and tips on how to make teaching, learning and assessment outstanding. Following observations, staff receive comprehensive and constructive action plans which recommend useful individualised training to help them to improve their practice and learners'

experience.

- Managers accurately monitor learners' progress towards achieving their targets in developing their English and mathematics skills. They also closely monitor progress toward their targets for retention and achievement on English and mathematics courses. This close scrutiny is very effective in driving further improvement. Achievement at all levels of functional skills English courses is now high, as is the achievement of the larger proportion of learners who complete functional skills qualifications in mathematics at level 1. Staff use the initial and diagnostic assessment of learners well to ensure that learners embark on a course that meets their specific needs.
- Managers' evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning in the subcontracted provision requires improvement. Lesson observations lack rigour, areas for improvement are not sufficiently explicit and action planning is not consistently precise enough.
- Managers and staff have a clear focus on promoting equality and diversity and fundamental British values through their teaching. All staff have undertaken mandatory training on the 'Prevent' duty, safeguarding, British values, and equality and diversity. They use their knowledge effectively to prepare students well for life in modern Britain. In lessons, learners take part in a wide range of learning activities, including 'hot topics' where they engage in topical discussion and debate around current issues such as 'Brexit', the terrorist attacks in London and Paris, and Catalonia's recent vote for independence.
- In lessons in English for speakers of other languages, tutors reinforce the importance of adhering to fundamental British values. As a result, learners understand the importance of respect and tolerance towards others, the benefits of living in a democratic society and the importance of freedom of speech. They can explain specific aspects of British culture including the celebration of events such as Remembrance Sunday.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve the achievement rates on accredited programmes in the small number of subjects where achievement is not high enough
- the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good across all areas, particularly in the subcontracted provision
- subcontractors meet requirements for staff training and updating in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Gardner  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Three inspectors and the head of service, as nominee, carried out the inspection. During the inspection, inspectors met with managers, observed teaching activities, and spoke with staff and apprentices in meetings and classrooms. Inspectors also reviewed a number of documents, learners' files and records.