

# Learning Matters

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

22–24 November 2017

Overall effectiveness			Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>	16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Inadequate</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Inadequate</b>		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>		
Outcomes for learners	<b>Inadequate</b>		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings

### This is an inadequate provider

- Since the previous inspection, action taken by senior leaders and managers to improve the quality of provision has had insufficient impact; as a result, the quality of provision has declined.
- Too few learners complete their courses and achieve their qualifications, and too many do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Too few learners develop the English and mathematics skills that they need to achieve their goals.
- Staff do not provide learners with advice and guidance that ensures that learners are on the right course.
- Tutors do not provide teaching that helps learners extend their skills and knowledge.
- Managers' actions to improve the attendance of learners have not had the desired impact; too many learners do not attend regularly.
- Managers have failed to put in place training for tutors to improve the quality of teaching.
- Managers and tutors do not monitor effectively the progress that learners make on their course.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Senior leaders, managers and staff have created a safe and nurturing culture that promotes the welfare of learners well.
- Staff support those learners who complete their course to go on to further learning and employment.
- Managers work well with partners in developing provision aimed at the town's most vulnerable young people.
- Staff are well trained to safeguard learners.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Learning Matters is based in Ipswich, the largest urban area in the county of Suffolk. In recent years there has been an increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are looked after by the local authority. Learning Matters is a part of Volunteering Matters, a national charitable organisation. It operates from one centre in central Ipswich. Until the summer of 2017, the provider operated a study programme for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners. Currently, a total of 20 learners are enrolled on study programmes delivered in ESOL, employability and work experience.
- Since the previous inspection, Learning Matters has experienced significant changes and a high turnover of staff. This, and the sickness absence of key staff, has led to reduced management capacity over the last 12 months. In the summer of 2017 there was an unexpected and sharp decline in the number of ESOL learners referred to the provider. This led to a marked reduction in learner numbers. To compensate, managers put in place a work experience and an employability programme targeted at local young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - ensuring that learners are placed on courses at the right level for them
  - using information on learners' starting points to plan learning that helps to extend their skills and knowledge
  - ensuring that lessons are planned so that they help all learners to make progress
  - using the findings from observations of lessons to inform staff development and training for tutors.
- Improve the attendance of learners by intervening promptly when their attendance declines.
- Monitor more closely the progress that learners make with their studies and intervene quickly when their progress stalls.
- Ensure that managers provide senior leaders with a wide range of management information so that they have an accurate view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the progress that learners make.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Since the previous inspection, managers have made insufficient progress in making necessary changes. Too many areas of performance have declined, have not improved or are not improving quickly enough. These include the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the outcomes that learners achieve.
- Senior leaders and managers have not monitored the progress they are making against all of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. As a result, significant weaknesses remain. For example, at the previous inspection tutors did not use information about learners' starting points to plan their learning. This remains the case and, as a consequence, too much teaching does not challenge learners to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Managers' assessment of performance has too little impact on improving the quality of provision. Self-assessment is insufficiently thorough and is overoptimistic. Managers have an inflated view of the quality of provision. They do not concentrate their work to improve provision in the right areas, such as on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Even when managers accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment, they do not use this information to inform the training and development of tutors. Records of observations are too descriptive and do not focus sufficiently on what learners are learning and the progress that they are making.
- Managers do not routinely monitor the progress that learners make. They do not collate or use information on the progress of learners to improve the provision, for example they have not taken action to improve the historically low achievement rates of learners who have a disability.
- Managers and staff have a commendably strong sense of shared values and a clear commitment to supporting the most vulnerable young people in the town. Managers ensure that there is an established culture of care, nurture and welfare for learners. This leads to a strong sense of respect between everyone at the centre.
- Managers work well to ensure that the provision reflects local needs. They responded well when the number of ESOL learners they anticipated to enrol this year unexpectedly declined. They quickly realigned provision to provide training targeted at local young people who are NEET. Managers work productively with partners such as the youth-offending and leaving-care teams to offer training to some of the town's hardest-to-reach young people.
- Managers ensure that there are sufficient work-experience placements available for current learners, a weakness at the previous inspection. They work well with employers to develop further work-experience opportunities and with a local social action programme to provide good-quality work experience for learners.

### The governance of the provider

- Since the previous inspection, managers are more accountable to senior leaders. They meet together regularly, and senior leaders receive reports on the provider's

performance. However, senior leaders do not fully understand all of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision because the information provided by managers does not give them a holistic picture of performance. For example, senior leaders are not aware of weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers ensure that staff are well equipped to meet learners' welfare needs by providing good-quality training on child sexual exploitation, mental health, youth work and preventing extremism and radicalisation. Where staff need to act to protect learners' welfare they do so promptly. They liaise well with others such as social workers and parents and carers and go the extra mile to promote the well-being of young people in their care.
- Managers implement safe recruitment and selection and complete detailed pre-employment checks on new staff to ensure their suitability for the role. Managers and tutors ensure that learners have a basic understanding of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Learning takes place in a safe environment.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Inadequate

- Staff do not provide advice and guidance to learners to ensure that they are placed on the most relevant course. Tutors do not use the results of assessments of learners' starting points to plan learning effectively. As a result, too many learners do not develop their skills at the right level, and subsequently do not reach their potential. For example, a few ESOL learners are on courses that accredit their existing knowledge and skills rather than build upon them.
- Assessment is weak. Tutors do not use the information gathered in the early stages of assessment to set sufficiently challenging targets for learners. Tutors do not routinely identify errors in learners' written work. As a result, learners continue to make the same mistakes. Targets often lack precision, many are too general and do not sufficiently challenge learners to develop quickly the skills that they need for employment, such as good attendance and time-keeping skills.
- Tutors do not challenge sufficiently the most able learners to work to their full potential and make rapid progress in their studies. As a result, there are a few incidents of low-level disruption that affects the learning of others in the class.
- Tutors too readily provide learners with answers to questions and do not allow learners to reflect on and use their own learning. Tutors do not provide feedback that helps learners make swift progress. Feedback does not identify what learners have done well and what they need do to improve their work and to develop their skills further.
- In English and mathematics lessons, many learners do not develop quickly enough the skills they need for work and further study. English and mathematics lessons do not engage learners well as they are not planned to meet learners' identified needs in these areas.
- In the main, tutors use activities well to interest and motivate learners who often have

challenging personal circumstances. As a result, most learners participate enthusiastically in lessons. Learners on employability courses participate well in meaningful group discussions. They discuss sensitively the types of employment that may be suitable for people with mental health needs. They identify accurately examples of good and bad practice at interviews.

- Managers and tutors promote British values, such as respect and tolerance, and learners develop a good understanding of the importance of equality in the workplace. Learners celebrate diversity of different faiths and cultures in the training centre. ESOL tutors are adept in tackling learners' use of derogatory words in their native languages and address sensitively the negative aspects of using this language in their new community.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

### Requires improvement

- The attendance of learners has improved over the last academic year but is still low. The new attendance officer provides a greater focus on improving the attendance of learners. However, while the attendance of learners is monitored closely, staff do not intervene until learners' absenteeism has reached a critical level.
- Staff provide extensive pastoral support to help learners, many with complex needs, to overcome personal barriers to learning. They understand young people's personal circumstances and work well with staff from other local agencies to provide the personal support that young people need. A prayer room is available to meet the religious needs of learners.
- Learners take part in work-experience placements as trainee youth workers and provide support to other young people, often with complex needs. Here, learners acquire good work-related skills. They increase well their confidence and self-esteem, learn to cooperate in teams and improve their problem-solving skills.
- Tutors ensure that the majority of learners behave well in lessons and encourage them to listen to each other's views. As a result, most make valuable contributions to lessons.
- Learners benefit from a good range of enrichment activities, such as a residential programme with the national citizenship service. ESOL learners host local dignitaries at a stately home and act as tour guides. This helps to improve their confidence in public speaking.

### Outcomes for learners

### Inadequate

- The standard of learners' work is not high enough. Too many current learners are not making the progress expected of them. These learners are not being challenged enough by their tutors and complete work that is well within their capabilities.
- At the previous inspection, too many learners left their study programme early and did not achieve their qualifications. This remained the case last year when retention and overall achievement rates declined and were low.
- Not enough learners taking qualifications in English and mathematics and ESOL achieve well. Managers identify that the reasons for previously low achievement, such as post-traumatic stress and poor mental health, reflect circumstances beyond their control.

However, the poor attendance of current learners, who are mostly young people who have been NEET, indicates that too many are not on track to complete their course.

- For those who do complete their programme, the large majority achieve their qualifications. As a result of effective support and guidance and work with partners, a high proportion successfully move on to further learning and employment.
- Current learners who are on work-experience programmes are developing well the skills that they need to be successful in their future job roles. Those in the early stages of their programme have settled quickly but it is too early to judge the progress that they are making.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	51435
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	62
Principal/CEO	Oonagh Aitken
Telephone number	01473 418019
Website	<a href="https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/">https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	20							
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+				Total	
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for whom the provider receives high-needs funding	1							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	–							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the learning manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

Jon Bowman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Cocker	Her Majesty's Inspector



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Learner View**

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to [www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Employer View**

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to [www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018