

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



28 February 2018

Mr Nigel Thomas  
Assistant Director of Community Development and Wellbeing  
Room 500  
County Hall  
Glenfield  
Leicester  
LE3 8RF

Dear Mr Thomas

### **Short inspection of Leicestershire County Council**

Following the short inspection on 5 and 6 February 2018, 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 2015.

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

You, senior managers and tutoring staff continue to provide good education and training in a number of vocational subjects across Leicestershire. The quality of your provision for learners with high needs is excellent. The range of education and training programmes you offer successfully addresses identified local needs and offers progression opportunities for learners that encourage them to achieve further.

Leaders and managers demonstrate a good capacity to improve the provision further. You and senior managers know the provision well and have an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The majority of areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been effectively resolved.

Leaders and managers ensure that learners make good progress and attain appropriately high standards. As a result, learners develop good employment-related, personal and social skills that improve their chances of progressing to higher levels of learning.

The directors and senior managers have effectively implemented performance management arrangements to improve the quality of learning and drive up success rates on the majority of training courses. However, you acknowledge that the evaluation of standards in taught sessions needs further improvement, so that it more quickly identifies and addresses weaker practice. The rate of progress for the apprentices requires further improvement, as do the achievement rates of functional

skills qualifications in English and mathematics.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and support a caring culture that protects all learners and staff. Relevant policies are in place and safe recruitment practices are followed. The varied venues used for learning sessions are appropriately risk assessed.

The designated safeguarding officer takes appropriate action when staff or learners raise concerns. Managers use their good external links to refer learners for specialist support. Learners know how to raise any concerns they have about their safety; they are confident that tutors and managers will deal with these quickly and effectively. Managers and curriculum coordinators design very effective protocols for staff communicating with vulnerable learners.

All staff receive suitable safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty update training. Managers appropriately reinforce staff's understanding of these and related topics at regular meetings. Tutors effectively improve learners' appreciation of how fundamental British values apply to their learning and lives. Learners have a good awareness of the dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism. They gain a good understanding of safe working when using internet-based media. For example, learners in an information and communication technology (ICT) class completed a quiz on internet safety, which ranged from simple safety tips on identifying safe websites through to guidance on safe passwords and protecting personal information when using social media.

### **Inspection findings**

- Senior leaders and managers have improved the structures for governance of the service. A clear governance strategy has been agreed and an elected member of the authority has lead responsibility for the oversight of the service.
- Senior managers provide elected members with useful, detailed reports on the performance of each curriculum area. As a result, directors and elected members now provide a good standard of governance to monitor, challenge managers and improve the service. Consequently, the quality of learners' experience continues to improve.
- Senior managers liaise with a range of external partners to ensure that the service meets the needs of local employers and populations. Training is delivered in a very large number of diverse settings and locations across Leicestershire. As a result, enrolment of learners from priority population groups has increased. For example, a new course to support learners who speak English as an additional language is being offered in Measham to meet the needs of employees in a large distribution centre.
- Managers and curriculum coordinators monitor apprentices' and learners' completion of learning milestones but have yet to formally agree suitable strategies to identify when apprentices do not make the rate of progress

expected of them. A minority of apprentices make slow progress.

- Different groups of learners achieve at a similar rate. Managers monitor the success of different groups of learners adequately but could do more to monitor specific groups. For example, managers closely monitor the progress made by learners who have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities and they are able to provide evidence of how effectively care leavers are succeeding. However, this analysis had not been used routinely to support improvement planning.
- Through effective performance management, leaders and managers have successfully reversed the fall in apprenticeship timely achievement rates in 2016/17, although these still require further improvement.
- In 2016/17, overall achievement rates improved on almost all programmes, except for the small numbers of apprentices on health and social care and supporting teaching and learning programmes. Managers have introduced an improvement strategy to address this performance shortfall and in the current academic year an increasing proportion of these apprentices achieve all parts of their frameworks; however, managers accept that further improvement is required.
- Achievement by adult learners has been consistently high since the previous inspection. Almost all trainees progressed to employment, employment with training or further education in 2016/17.
- A higher proportion of learners and apprentices now achieve their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics, but this still requires further improvement.
- Attendance on most programmes is good. Attendance rates have improved each year since the previous inspection. However, attendance at a few English and mathematics sessions is too low.
- Learners' achievement of GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics in 2016/17 was good. However, with the recent changes to curriculum content and grading criteria, managers are aware that this area requires close attention to sustain this.
- Tutors and learning support assistants use a wide range of good resources to plan activities that maintain learners' interest well throughout lessons and help them succeed.
- The vast majority of learners who choose to attend their functional skills classes make good progress in the development of their English skills, particularly at entry level and level one. Learners have good opportunities to improve their speaking and listening, reading and writing skills, with a good balance across all of these skills.
- Learners who speak English as an additional language make particularly good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. After just a few weeks, refugee learners are more able to communicate with doctors, banks and schools, and feel confident about living in their local communities.
- Learners develop good skills in mathematics, with examples of learners at entry

level developing skills in managing their money, for example through budgeting and working out the cost of food in restaurants within a given budget. In each lesson for learners with high needs, learners actively use mathematics to work out how much their tea and coffee will cost, identify the right coins and calculate their change.

- In classes with learners working towards qualifications at both levels one and two, tutors do not plan effectively the work for learners working towards level two qualifications. These learners do not have work which is sufficiently challenging to enable them to maximise their learning and progress.
- The self-assessment process is well established. It provides an accurate overview of how the provision has developed over time. The associated improvement action plan includes a sufficient range of relevant objectives to raise standards across the provision. Senior managers review the plan effectively to ensure that programme quality improves for all apprentices and learners. However, the report's text is overly descriptive and the document is very lengthy.
- Managers carry out regular formal observations of teaching, learning and assessments delivered by each tutor. The results of these observations are used to plan a wide range of staff training and development activities. However, observations focus more strongly on the actions of the tutors rather than on the learning taking place. In a few instances, observers fail to identify all areas of good practice and areas for improvement.
- Tutors have maintained the good teaching identified at the previous inspection. In the provision for learners with high needs, managers have maintained the very high standards through well-established partnership arrangements with adult social care teams, feeder schools and parents. Tutors plan highly individualised learning programmes, record learners' individual achievements and progress in good detail and deliver interesting learning activities that are tailored to meet learners' needs very well.
- Learners enjoy learning and are inspired to learn further. Learners on non-accredited courses can clearly identify the progress they are making.
- Tutors embed the promotion of British values effectively into taught sessions and apprentices and learners demonstrate a good understanding of relevant topics.
- Tutors provide apprentices and learners with appropriate careers advice and guidance to ensure that they enrol on the correct type and level of course to meet their current career plans. In many cases, tutors provide sufficient advice and information to help apprentices and learners identify longer-term career plans and plan their next steps.
- Tutors set apprentices and learners clear, long-term targets related to their academic, personal and employment-related skill development.
- Managers have implemented highly effective advice and careers guidance arrangements for learners with high needs on the Transitions Learning programmes. Staff communicate closely with schools, parents and carers to identify potential progression routes for these learners.
- Experienced and skilful staff provide very effective advice and guidance for

learners with mental health conditions and make very good use of volunteering opportunities where these learners are supported well to develop the confidence and skills they need to progress to their next steps.

- While managers collect data on the progression of many apprentices and learners, this information is not routinely available to operational and venue managers to support the planning of service improvements.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- managers rigorously implement performance management arrangements to ensure that all apprentices make good progress and achieve their qualifications within the planned duration of their programmes
- managers analyse all available data to monitor the progress and destinations of all groups of apprentices and learners, including care leavers
- a consistently high proportion of apprentices and learners attend their planned learning sessions
- taught sessions are rigorously assessed and evaluated so that weaknesses are identified and standards swiftly improve
- all tutors are suitably skilled and confident to deliver high-quality support that helps apprentices and learners at all levels swiftly develop their skills in English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Gerard McGrath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, your funding standards and quality improvement officer assisted us as nominee. We met with managers, tutors and employers and used individual interviews and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners. These views are reflected within this letter. We reviewed learners' assessed work. We evaluated the effectiveness of key documents, including those relating to the planning of learning, quality improvement, performance monitoring and safeguarding. Inspectors took account of the organisation's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report.