

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



20 March 2018

Mr Rob Sweetzer-Sturt
Head of Service
Chy Trevail
Beacon Technology Park
Dunmere Road
Bodmin
PL31 2FR

Dear Mr Sweetzer-Sturt

Short inspection of Cornwall Adult Education Service

Following the short inspection on 21–22 February, 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 Cornwall Adult Education Service (CAES) was judged to be good in November 2014.

Cornwall Adult Education Service continues to be good.

You and your team have carried out the four recommendations made at your previous inspection effectively. Your careful review of the courses provided with Cornwall Council has resulted in the strategic decision not to provide apprenticeships any longer. By concentrating on increasing opportunities for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners, you are helping more to take part in learning and training. Your provision of many courses is improving the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners as well as their families. Consequently, their chances of gaining employment have improved. Your new governors are making a positive contribution to ensuring that the changed arrangements for governance are effective in holding senior managers more to account. Governors are knowledgeable about learners, scrutinise performance carefully and are fully committed to the mission and ethos of the service. Finally, your prompt actions have ensured that safeguarding policies and procedures reflect good practice.

Inspectors and your observers jointly assessed the quality of teaching and learning over time. They agreed that tutors' high expectations and good subject knowledge help learners to plan effectively for their next steps for careers in, for example, health or social care. Learners make good progress as a result of careful and thoughtful planning and delivery of teaching and learning by tutors. Tutors prepare well, engage learners sensitively, and use teaching and learning resources effectively. Learners find the information for them on the virtual learning environment very helpful.

Tutors use learning support assistants well as a result of undertaking effective professional development in maximising the use of support staff. Learning support assistants provide highly effective help to learners in class. They are knowledgeable about the courses and know how to coach reluctant learners or those experiencing difficulties, for example as a result of dyslexia. Learners who need additional assistance for issues such as mental ill-health or social problems receive good support from tutors.

Tutors mark learners' work in line with the agreed assessment approach that advocates providing constructive feedback and encouraging explanations. They return marked work very promptly to learners. This approach motivates learners to succeed.

Learners receive helpful advice and guidance about possible careers or training. As a result, many younger learners realise the importance of gaining English and mathematics qualifications. They develop a better awareness of careers or employment they may wish to follow. Tutors give learners good support to help their progression into further education, training or employment.

Learners taking leisure and creative arts courses produce work of a very high standard. They speak with great pride about how their improved skills in ceramics, drawing and communication have benefited them professionally and socially.

Learners' attendance is too low, although suitable procedures to follow up absences are in place. Tutors are aware of reasons for learners' absence and their whereabouts when absent. However, their absence affects the pace of learning and how effectively tutors and learners interact with each other.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding procedures and practices are thorough and robust. Learners feel safe in the venues where they attend. They know whom to contact and how to report concerns. They find the 'credit card' size safeguarding advice they carry very useful and informative. However, a few learners interviewed by inspectors were not as aware of issues around online safety. Learners and tutors carefully adhere to health and safety rules. Learners are respectful of each other and keen to help fellow learners in difficulty.

Staff, including subcontractors' tutors, receive regular updating and training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. One group of study programme learners wrote an impressive poem about freedom illustrating their understanding of respect, liberty and the rule of law. The 'Prevent' duty action plan is thorough and suitably detailed.

However, planned training to update staff on current government priorities, such as trafficking of people and exploitation, domestic violence and drug dealing, has not taken place.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to look at how effectively tutors set high expectations of learners and develop learners' skills, specific to their courses and to prepare them for employment.
- Learners receive realistic and challenging goals in effective personal learning plans. They are keen to understand how they can improve. Tutors express high expectations through the targets that learners and tutors review regularly. Aspirational targets for learners on courses leading to higher education have encouraged them to aim high – for example, applying to become a mental health nurse as a result of clear guidance offered.
- Learners recognise the influence that learning has on their futures and employment opportunities, and sometimes their life chances. Learners improve their English skills enabling them, for example, to help other parents write reports and to help their children with their school work.
- My second line of enquiry was to assess how effectively managers monitor the work and impact of subcontractors.
- Managers monitor the work of subcontractors carefully and regularly. They make sure that learners with subcontractors receive the help and support they need. A few learners on study programmes do not have suitable work experience, although this is not the case for the majority of learners.
- Managers of the service keep a close check on learners' attendance through regular contact and weekly reports with managers in subcontractors. However, the attendance of a few learners is not regular enough. Although tutors are aware of difficulties that prevent some learners from attending regularly, they do not consistently ensure that learners improve their attendance.
- Tutors in subcontractors improve their practice by taking part in professional development and training organised by CAES – for example, safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. They also improve as a result of the constructive advice they receive when their teaching is observed by managers of CAES.
- My third line of enquiry was to look at how robust the process is to ensure that learners achieve appropriately challenging individual learning goals.
- Learners across all courses have appropriate personal learning plans with clear goals for themselves and for their group to achieve. Tutors review and adjust these with learners at suitable points. Consequently, learners make good progress and feel they gain new skills and develop a wider appreciation of the subject.
- Tutors organise work according to the different levels of learners' skills and knowledge. Learners work at the pace appropriate to them and progress quickly. For example, more experienced learners in a mixed-ability sewing group work effectively on making full garments. Learners in a ceramics class undertake individual projects ranging from tile making to intricate jewellery craft.
- When reviewing learning plans, tutors and learners identify helpful next steps such as progressing to take GCSE English or mathematics after completing a course at a lower level.

- My fourth line of enquiry was to look at steps managers and tutors take to ensure that pass rates for English and mathematics remain high, and that learners continue to improve their numeracy and literacy skills as appropriate to their circumstances.
- All learners are carefully assessed before they start their course. The assessment is complemented by a careful interview to ensure that they are on the right level of course. During their course, learners who need additional help receive good personal support.
- During their discrete English and mathematics courses, learners receive regular, helpful written and verbal explanations that help them to understand what they need to do to improve. Tutors prepare learners to be successful in their examinations well.
- In vocational and leisure courses, tutors do not routinely focus on improving English and mathematics skills, although their planning identifies topics and opportunities to do so.
- My next line of enquiry was to look at the progress that learners on study programmes make to enable them to advance to appropriate education, training or employment.
- Numbers of learners on the study programmes delivered by subcontractors are small. The aims for most learners are to gain functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics, and skills for employment or further study. The majority make good progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Learners receive good support in acquiring general skills, such as writing curriculum vitae and letters of application for jobs, and interview skills. They learn about and gain skills in the vocational areas they choose to follow by undertaking relevant work experience or volunteering, for example in shops or cafes.
- In the field of health and social care, learners gain valuable experience from working in nurseries, a local hospital and a medical centre reception. However, a small number of learners when spoken to by inspectors were unaware of arrangements for them to gain work experience or undertake a work placement.
- My final line of enquiry was to look at the progress made in collecting and using information on learners' destinations.
- Tutors follow a clear process by which they find out about what learners intend to do next on completion of their courses. The new information system enables managers and tutors to review and use the information quickly.
- Managers also gather information on whether learners have sustained their progression into work or further training six months after they have completed their courses. Managers have not yet carried out their plans to analyse this information to evaluate fully the success of the courses.

Next steps for the provider

Senior managers should ensure that:

- they bring forward the planned training on current safeguarding priorities and ensure that their staff and those of subcontractors are fully aware of online safety
- their tutors and those of the subcontractors are more resolute in making sure that learners improve their attendance
- all learners on study programmes undertake suitable work experience or work placements when they are ready.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Green
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Ofsted Inspectors were assisted by the quality coordinator as nominee. We met with you, governors, senior managers, tutors and learners. We observed teaching and learning. Some of these activities were conducted jointly with your observers. We scrutinised key strategic and policy documents, including those relating to self-assessment, quality assurance, safeguarding and the service's performance. We analysed information on learners' achievements. We also analysed feedback from learners and apprentices gathered during the inspection.