

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Community learning and skills

Inspection dates

6–9 March 2018

Overall effectiveness		Good	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Adult learning programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Governors, senior leaders and managers have successfully rectified all the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, and have maintained the aspects that were good.
- Managers have increased the number of adults who achieve their qualifications; in 2016/17, the large majority of adult learners were successful, including in English and mathematics.
- Senior leaders and managers have successfully amended courses, so that adults develop the skills they need for future work or their everyday lives.
- Senior leaders and managers have developed good working relationships with external partners, such as Refugee Action that helps newly arrived migrants to adjust to life in Britain.
- Current learners make good progress on their courses, developing relevant knowledge and skills, and achieving qualifications that help them to fulfil their personal goals and aspirations.
- Adults enrolled with your subcontractor Acorn Recovery Project develop good mentoring and counselling skills; as a result, they gain greater self-awareness and provide good support to others.
- Adults on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses and functional skills English courses develop good language skills, which include reading, writing, speaking and listening to others confidently.
- Tutors make very good use of the rich diversity of learners to explore a wide range of cultures and traditions. Learners listen to the views of others and appreciate their differences.
- A small minority of adults do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Managers' assessments of the quality of courses do not focus sufficiently on the learners' experience or the impact of teaching on their progress.
- Not all adults benefit from high-quality learning environments or accommodation.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The Continuing Education Service is part of Stockport Council's Place Directorate. The service delivers courses mainly in the provider's learning centre and in two other venues in the borough. The provision is targeted at adults new to learning or with low levels of qualifications, and those who speak English as an additional language. Many learners are refugees who are seeking employment. The council subcontracts to organisation, Acorn Recovery Projects, which provides specialist courses for people who are recovering from drug or alcohol addiction.
- The service offers a range of courses, the majority of which are in English, mathematics and ESOL. Stockport has more residents qualified to level 4 or higher and fewer residents without any qualifications than in Greater Manchester or nationally. The proportion of Stockport residents who are unemployed is lower than that in the North West region and the national average.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Tutors should ensure that they set suitably demanding work for learners using their assessment of learners' starting points. In particular, tutors should ensure that they challenge the most able learners to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that their evaluation of the quality of courses focuses on the impact of teaching and assessment on learning, and on the progress that learners make.
- Managers should review and upgrade the accommodation and resources so that all learners benefit from high-quality learning environments.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, governors and senior leaders have rectified all of the identified weaknesses and maintained the strengths. Because of swift and successful actions, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare, and outcomes for adults have improved and are now good.
- Managers have reviewed the courses they offer in order to support the council's priorities of economic and personal well-being for local residents alongside developing knowledgeable, skilled and adaptable employees in the area. They have made important changes, removing leisure courses and focusing the offer to provide courses in English, mathematics and ESOL.
- Managers and tutors identify very clearly the specific groups of adults for whom they design courses. For example, they target people who are unemployed, homeless or poorly prepared for employment. They now recruit learners from these priority groups very successfully and increasingly are running courses for learners in deprived areas in Stockport, in addition to those in the open-learning centre.
- Senior leaders and managers have developed good links with a range of external agencies. For example, they have good working relationships with the charity Refugee Action, which helps newly arrived migrants and asylum seekers to adjust to life in Britain. They also have good links with agencies dealing with homelessness, drug and alcohol misuse and domestic violence. These links are of great benefit to learners and staff when they need specialist advice and support.
- Senior leaders and managers have improved the arrangements with organisations that run courses on behalf of the service. They set demanding targets for their subcontractors, including for the recruitment of learners and their achievements. The service manager monitors the quality of the subcontracted provision rigorously and regularly, including observations of lessons and checking learners' work. The current subcontractor, Acorn Recovery Projects, provides high-quality training in mentoring and counselling to learners who are recovering from drug and alcohol misuse.
- Senior leaders and managers have high expectations of learners and their potential achievements, leading to good outcomes. Tutors provide good support to learners to help them improve their self-confidence and self-esteem, develop knowledge and skills, and gain qualifications that will help them to get a job and to progress in their chosen occupations.
- Senior leaders and managers have made significant improvements to the process for checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Staff who observe lessons produce clear action plans for the tutors they observe, based on the weaknesses they identify.
- Tutors are now more accountable to managers and senior leaders for the quality of their work. Senior leaders and managers set high standards for staff against which they evaluate the quality of their work. They provide support for staff who need it and in most cases this leads to improvement. Where the work of staff remains poor after they receive support, managers follow appropriate procedures to ensure that they leave the service.

Since the previous inspection, several staff whose work has not been up to the required standard have left.

- Senior leaders, managers and tutors promote equality of opportunity and the inclusion of all learners very well. They welcome diversity and create learning environments where mutual respect is important. Tutors and learners work together very successfully. Collectively, they have zero tolerance of bullying, discrimination, unfair treatment and harassment. Managers and tutors promote fundamental British values very actively. Learners have a good understanding of the importance of democracy, the rule of law and tolerance of those of other faiths or no faith at all.
- Senior leaders and managers now collect data about learners' destinations. Learners' progression to positive destinations on completion of their courses is good.
- Senior leaders and managers are aware that the learning centre is in need of significant upgrading. Similarly, the accommodation and learning resources require improvement to create a high-quality learning environment for learners. Several rooms are too small for the number of learners who use them. The cramped conditions make it difficult for staff to use a range of different learning activities such as group work. Managers' evaluation of their courses is thorough.
- Managers make good use of data on learners' retention, achievements and destinations. The self-assessment report is too descriptive, insufficiently concise and does not focus enough on learners' experiences and the impact that teaching has on their progress. Managers do not give enough attention to the quality and achievement rates of courses at level 3 or to the differences in achievement rates between different groups of adults. The quality improvement plan does not focus enough on the weaknesses, on the actions needed to eliminate them and the timescales involved.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is now effective. Council members formed an improvement board in June 2016. Board members have expertise and knowledge of adult education and learning. Board members check systematically how effectively the training helps learners to develop their English, mathematical and ESOL knowledge and skills, and how successfully it prepares them for work.
- Board members meet regularly. They receive reliable and detailed information from senior leaders and managers about the quality of the courses and learners' achievements. They are now more able to challenge and support senior leaders and managers than governors were in 2016.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders and managers give a high priority to safeguarding learners and staff. The designated safeguarding officer and their deputy have benefited from appropriate training. Staff receive good update training in safeguarding. Managers check the suitability of staff to work in the service. The single central register shows appropriate employment checks are completed and it is up to date and accurate.

- Learners feel safe. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They are clear about to whom they should report concerns relating to their safety. Learners have a limited understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- The designated safeguarding officer takes safeguarding and related incidents very seriously. Safeguarding officers take prompt action when staff or learners report an incident. The records of safeguarding incidents provide a detailed commentary of the event and what actions staff take. The designated safeguarding officer refers learners to other specialist agencies quickly, such as those dealing with homelessness or domestic violence, when specialist advice is needed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Currently 495 adult learners are following courses, with 441 at entry level/level 1, 45 at level 2 and nine at level 3. Of these, 14 learners study at the subcontractor, Acorn Recovery Projects. Learners studying at the subcontractor are in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction and study a non-accredited counselling course at level 2. A further 11 learners who are new migrants have been referred through the charity Refugee Action. They attend an English course in a community venue. Learners study a range of accredited and non-accredited courses including ESOL, English, mathematics, childcare, supporting teaching and learning in schools, and counselling.
- Managers and tutors provide a welcoming learning environment which enables adults, who often lack confidence or are new to the country, to settle in quickly and make friends. Tutors provide highly effective support, including for disadvantaged learners such as recent migrants and former drug or alcohol addicts.
- Tutors have good subject knowledge and the majority plan a range of activities that engage learners successfully. As a result, learners make good progress and work enthusiastically. For example, learners at the subcontractor Acorn Recovery Project, recognise the impact of their former addiction on their families and themselves and understand how newly learned counselling techniques can assist themselves and others.
- The majority of tutors make good use of learners' starting points to set aspirational individual targets. This process includes learners on subcontracted and non-accredited courses, as well as those on accredited courses. Learners are aware of what they need to do to complete their courses successfully, and the majority make good progress. This is particularly the case for learners on ESOL and English courses.
- Tutors make good links to learners' personal experiences and use these appropriately to help them understand, develop and apply their knowledge and English skills gained in their everyday lives. Tutors develop learners' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills successfully. For example, they are able to discuss the good and bad points of the benefits and welfare system; others are able to write a letter to their bank manager concerning an overdraft.
- Learners have a good understanding of their work. They are keen to learn and contribute fully. The majority can explain how the new knowledge and skills that they gain are helping them to improve their lives. For example, childcare learners are able to describe how the course assists them to develop childcare and English skills and how it gives them an insight into future study or job opportunities.

- Tutors check and assess learners' work regularly. They have a clear understanding of the good progress and skills development of their learners. The majority of learners benefit from specific and helpful feedback from supportive tutors. This is particularly beneficial for learners who lack confidence and enables them to improve the standard of their work.
- Learners from a wide range of different cultures show very high levels of respect to each other and to their tutors. Learners work collaboratively and check each other's work confidently. For example, ESOL learners check the accuracy of their peers' reading. Tutors regularly set work that learners complete between lessons, which helps them to make good progress.
- Tutors make excellent use of the rich diversity among learners to explore a wide range of cultures and traditions, including fundamental British values, which learners understand and respect. For example, ESOL learners research their local member of parliament (MP), an exercise which extends their understanding of the British political system and their local communities.
- Tutors promote equality and diversity competently through a range of well-chosen topics. For example, care learners analyse and discuss the numbers of males in care, and ESOL learners share the types of food they cook for their family at home.
- The targets and activities that tutors plan and implement in a minority of lessons are too easy. This means that the most able learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Tutors ensure that their assessment of learners' starting points identifies individual learners' support needs early. A minority of tutors do not plan lessons carefully enough to ensure that learning support staff are able to provide effective support; this limits the progress of a few learners.
- A very small minority of tutors do not check learners' understanding thoroughly enough and so are not fully aware of the progress that individual learners make in the lesson.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners enthuse about the development of their self-confidence and self-esteem. Those who have not engaged in learning for some time appreciate the opportunities that tutors provide. For example, ESOL learners improve their self-esteem and now feel more confident when speaking to people for the first time. Learners are better able to help their children with homework.
- Learners enjoy their classes; they engage with each other and contribute enthusiastically. Learners of different cultures show respect for each other and their tutors. They work very effectively and collaboratively. Learners take part in discussions in class; they listen to the views of others and appreciate the differences in other cultures. Behaviour is excellent.
- Tutors' promotion of fundamental British values in lessons is excellent. For example, ESOL learners discuss a better phrase for 'the elderly' and understand why the term 'older people' is more respectful. Learners develop a good awareness of democracy by learning about the suffragettes in Manchester and how they contributed to the achievement of the vote for women.

- Learners receive useful information, advice and guidance prior to, during and at the end of their courses. This ensures that they are on the most appropriate courses to meet their personal aspirations. Most learners progress to their intended destinations, whether that be further study, volunteering or employment.
- The majority of ESOL learners make good progress in developing new and highly useful written and oral skills which benefit them in their lives. For example, learners benefit from gaining the skills and confidence to complete an application form that has resulted in them gaining a job, a volunteering role or entry onto a counselling course at level 3.
- Tutors provide useful feedback regarding subject content, spelling, punctuation and grammar so that learners improve their work continually. Learners develop good speaking, reading, listening and communication skills through a range of activities, such as debate, discussion and formal presentations.
- Learners develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their families safe when working online. They learn how to use parental controls and permissions when using social media, as well as developing an understanding of how to avoid online fraud. Learners feel safe and are aware of whom they should contact if they have any concerns about their own or other people's safety.
- Learners receive information at induction about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. However, they do not always have a good understanding of how these dangers might apply to them or their family members.
- Managers' strategies to increase the number of learners from priority groups are successful. For example, learners who speak English as an additional language benefit by developing the language skills they need for life and work. Learners who are in recovery from drug or alcohol addiction develop mentoring skills and work in voluntary roles.
- In a minority of ESOL lessons, tutors develop learners' information and communication technology skills very effectively. For example, learners use websites to book train tickets, research their local MP or find recipes from different countries.
- Managers' actions to improve attendance have led to improvements in the current year. Attendance remains too low in a minority of lessons.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Managers' strategies to improve the proportion of adults who achieve their qualifications have been successful for the vast majority of courses. In 2016/17, overall achievement rates were high. A steady improvement has occurred over the last three years.
- In 2016/17, the proportion of learners on subcontracted courses who achieved their qualifications was high. These courses provide good opportunities for learners who are in recovery from addiction to drugs and alcohol to improve their mental and physical health, and develop a safer lifestyle.
- Current learners make good progress on their courses. They develop relevant knowledge and skills that help them to achieve their personal goals and aspirations, including on non-accredited courses. Learners value and appreciate the knowledge and skills they acquire in English, mathematics, mentoring, counselling and childcare.
- Almost all learners progress to employment, further education or volunteering. Most ESOL

learners progress to a higher level of study. Learners are enthusiastic about how they have improved their self-confidence and motivation. They learn new knowledge and skills that they need for everyday life and often this makes them feel less isolated.

- The proportion of learners who gained English and mathematical functional skills qualifications rose in 2016/17 compared to the previous year, and was high. The vast majority of learners who stay on their courses to the end pass their examinations in ESOL, English and mathematics. However, in 2016/17 too many learners on courses at level 3 left early. In the current year, the number who have remained to the end of their courses has increased.
- The work of the large majority of learners is of a good standard. Learners on ESOL courses and functional skills English courses develop good language skills, which include pronunciation, reading, speaking and listening confidently. These skills enable learners to progress to further study, in addition to helping them in their everyday life.
- In 2016/17 the proportion of learners who remained on their courses was lower for White learners than for Black learners. Learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability do not achieve as well as their peers, and males do not achieve as well as females. Managers are using the data well and taking appropriate actions to reduce the gaps in achievement.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50237
Type of provider	Community learning and skills
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	874
Head of Service	Richard Mortimer
Telephone number	0161 480 4949
Website	www.stockport.moodle.webanywhere.co.uk

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+
	–	441	–	45	–	9	–	–
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 which the provider receives high-needs funding	–							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Acorn Recovery Projects							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of adult learning 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 partners; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. They sampled learners' files and their work. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Andrea Machell, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ken Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
Bev Cross	Ofsted 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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email 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.

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.

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.

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/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

This publication is available at 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018