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Mr Christopher White  
Service Manager  
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Dear Mr White

### **Short inspection of Medway Council**

Following the short inspection on 2 and 3 May 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 June 2015.

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

Since your previous inspection, leaders and managers have made sure that the adult education service continues to provide a good educational experience for learners and apprentices. You, your senior management team, board members and staff place a strong emphasis on providing a welcoming and safe environment for learners.

Senior managers are clear about the education centre's strengths and areas for improvement. You have maintained the strengths and successfully tackled the very large majority of weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Clear plans are in place to raise standards in the few areas that require further improvement. Your managers have high expectations for staff, learners and apprentices. They support tutors well to improve provision.

Managers work effectively and in close partnership with local job centres to identify needs and provide courses that will help unemployed learners to secure jobs. For example, managers provide retail courses at entry level 3, which is the minimum requirement for working in retail at the local Bluewater shopping centre. Board members and senior managers appreciate the important role their adult education centre plays in combatting social isolation, as part of the public health agenda in the Medway region.

Learners and apprentices value and enjoy their training and education. The large majority achieve their qualifications and progress to further training, education or employment.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have successfully introduced a well-managed apprenticeship programme. Apprentices benefit from frequent visits and good support from their assessors, and the vast majority are making good progress. Employers are sufficiently involved in their apprentices' training to ensure that they develop exactly the right skills, knowledge and behaviours for their roles.

Board members receive clear quarterly reports, with detailed information about adult education and the progress learners and apprentices are making. They are frequent visitors to the centre to make sure that they fully understand what affects the quality of provision.

Teaching, learning and assessment remain good but are not yet outstanding. In a small minority of lessons, tutors do not check learning sufficiently well to make sure that learners of all abilities are making the progress they are capable of.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have maintained good safeguarding arrangements since the previous inspection. Managers and staff make sure that students are safe and feel safe. Learners know who to talk to if they have any concerns. You and your staff continue to prioritise safeguarding and ensure that the centre provides a safe environment for learning. Managers deal with concerns promptly, recording them in detail and using strong links with specialist local agencies when necessary to support individuals.

Board members and staff at all levels have a good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty. Learners receive training on how to stay safe, including from extremist activities and radicalisation. However, too few learners can remember the content of the training and how it applies to them.

Learners are polite and respectful to each other in class and in public areas. Staff display colourful and contextualised posters to support the British values that learners are introduced to at the beginning of their studies. These posters and displays also link British values to the subjects being studied. However, learners' understanding of British values is inconsistent. While some can recall learning about them during their course, significant numbers are not able to explain how these have an impact on their learning or their lives.

### **Inspection findings**

- Board members, leaders and managers have a good focus on improving the quality of the provision through self-evaluation and quality-improvement activities. This leads to concerted and usually effective improvement action when required.

- Managers have made sure that all tutors now use their assessments of learners' starting points to set appropriate, individualised targets. Most learners have personalised learning plans, which staff use well to monitor and record their progress.
- Learners value their classes, not only because of the skills and knowledge they acquire but also because of the interactions they have with others. That interaction helps to combat any isolation they may have felt in the past. Many now feel part of their community and have built new social networks. Learners who have recently been diagnosed with dementia and/or physical disabilities value their lessons, as they help them to maintain and develop skills.
- Managers have acted effectively to improve learners' development of literacy skills. They ensure that the large majority of learners receive clear and helpful feedback on their spelling, punctuation and grammar in their written work. The centre's marking policy gives good guidance to tutors about the need for helpful feedback to learners.
- Managers are committed to developing outstanding teaching and learning across all courses. However, they are not yet able to identify whether staff development activities to improve teaching, learning and assessment have had a positive impact on learners' progress.
- Since the previous inspection, achievement rates for accredited mathematics courses have improved to national rates but need to be improved further. Achievement rates for accredited English courses have also improved, but remain well below national rates.
- Learners benefit from good-quality information and guidance to help them select the right courses. The highly qualified careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) coordinator provides good initial CIAG to all learners before they select their courses. For learners on employability and English and mathematics courses, this includes individual and group guidance during early classes and at the end of each course. This guidance helps learners to make the right choices and supports many learners to progress to further courses. A good proportion of learners move on from non-accredited to accredited courses.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to focus on developing learners' and apprentices' knowledge of 'Prevent' and British values, so that learners and apprentices understand how they apply to their lives and work
- they improve learners' achievement rates for basic English and mathematics qualifications, to exceed those of similar providers nationally
- staff development activities help tutors develop outstanding teaching and learning practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Hill  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector were assisted by the head of quality and curriculum, as nominee. We met with you, members of the senior management team, members of the board, managers, tutors, an assessor, learners and apprentices. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment and reviewed learners' work. We scrutinised key strategic and policy documents, including those related to safeguarding, quality assurance and the performance of provision. We analysed data on learners' and apprentices' achievement and progress from their starting points, and considered their views.