

Learn Plus Us

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

Unique reference number:

1237195

Name of lead inspector:

Jane Hughes HMI

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Type of provider:

Independent learning provider

Address:

63–65 Colney Hatch Lane
London
N10 1LR

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Learn Plus Us was inspected in March 2018. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Learn Plus Us is a small independent learning provider based in Barnet, north London. The provider opened in 2008 and since 2014 has offered courses for adult learners in childcare, education, English and mathematics, and health and social care. Since January 2018, the provider has also been offering apprenticeships in the same subjects. At the time of the monitoring visit, Learn Plus Us had 90 apprentices and 117 adult learners. The majority of adult learners fund their studies through an advanced learner loan and register with the provider from across London.

Themes

What impact have leaders' and managers' actions had in increasing the proportion of adult learners, male learners and those from minority ethnic backgrounds who achieve qualifications in childcare and health and social care? Significant progress

Leaders' and managers' actions have secured a marked improvement in the overall proportion of adults who achieve their qualifications within the planned time. In 2017/18 the proportion of adult learners who achieved qualifications in health and social care was very high. The vast majority of learners taking qualifications in childcare and early years at levels 2 and 3 achieved them.

All of the male learners taking qualifications in 2017/18 achieved. The gap between achievement rates for learners from different ethnic groups has closed and the vast majority now achieve at the same rate as their peers. Leaders have correctly identified that there remains a small group of Asian learners who achieve less well. Leaders have put in place focused actions to improve this.

Leaders and managers have been successful in implementing an effective, new tracking system to check the progress that learners make. Leaders, managers and assessors use this system very well to track closely learners' progress and identify quickly when learners fall behind or need extra help. As a result, they now have a clear view on how their learners are progressing towards completing their qualifications on time. The vast majority of adult learners who started courses in this academic year have achieved them. The current cohort of apprentices are making good progress and are on track to achieve their qualifications.

How effective have senior leaders been in implementing a system of governance that provides sufficient external challenge and scrutiny and holds leaders and managers to account?

Reasonable progress

Since the inspection, leaders and managers have introduced an external chair and board of governors to offer support and challenge to the directors. The chair has extensive experience in working with private training providers and board members have a good range of skills and knowledge within the childcare and education sectors. For example, one has specialist knowledge in working with learners who have additional learning needs, and another is a qualified teacher.

The board has clear lines of responsibility and monthly meetings take place. During the meetings board members successfully support and challenge the senior leadership team and set precise actions for leaders. For example, the board have supported the senior leadership team to identify the risks to the business. They have also put in place contingency plans, should key members of staff unexpectedly be away from the business. Board members attend staff meetings and support managers effectively to observe teaching, learning and assessment.

The board members have access during their meetings to reports and information on the progress learners make. However, they do not receive detailed reports in sufficient time before the meetings to consider them fully. They do not receive regular reports on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to give them a better understanding of how leaders' and managers' actions have improved tutors' and assessors' practice.

What impact have leaders and managers had in supporting tutors and assessors to improve their practice in giving learners helpful feedback on their work and setting and reviewing clear actions at learners' progress reviews?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have supported assessors and tutors with a good variety of staff development activities to help them improve their practice. Assessors and tutors have attended effective group and one-to-one training sessions, focusing on how to set clear, meaningful and helpful targets for learners. As a result, the majority of assessors and tutors now set targets in progress reviews that give learners clear instructions on how to achieve them.

Assessors and tutors give learners helpful, developmental feedback during training sessions, professional discussions and workplace assessments. This gives learners a clear understanding of what they did well, the progress they have made and how they can improve their practice. However, assessors do not give learners the same level of detailed feedback on their written work to help them improve.

Assessors and tutors have fully engaged in the opportunity to complete a level 5 course in education and training. They use the skills and knowledge they learn through this training to improve their teaching practice. For example, their learning plans for group sessions and one-to-one reviews now include useful exercises to integrate the mathematical skills learners need in a childcare setting.

Assessors and tutors set high expectations with their learners. These are carefully linked to the qualification standards and the needs of the childcare and health and social care sectors. They direct learners well to additional reading, online resources and useful information. As a result, learners make good progress towards achieving their qualifications and deepen their understanding of the subjects they study.

How effectively do staff use the observations of teaching, learning and assessment to focus on the impact of teaching on learners' progress from their starting points? Reasonable progress

Since the inspection, leaders and managers have revised and strengthened their observation of teaching, learning and assessment process. Staff responsible for observing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have implemented a frequent schedule of observations. They accurately evaluate how effectively assessors and tutors use the information about learners' starting points to plan and teach sessions that motivate and challenge learners.

Staff thoroughly assess the prior skills and knowledge learners have before they start a course. For example, they assess learners' skills in English and mathematics, learners' vocational understanding of the subject they plan to study and their wider social and personal skills. Assessors and tutors make good use of this information when facilitating group activities with learners.

Assessors and tutors know their learners very well and use relevant real-life examples to support their teaching. For example, in functional skills mathematics, learners convert metric and imperial calculations using examples such as refuelling a car and buying loose fruit and vegetables.

During observations of teaching, learning and assessment observers pay close attention to how effectively assessors and tutors deliver sessions and their impact on learners. Observers accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses in sessions and set clear and realistic targets for assessors and tutors to make improvements. However, observers do not always follow up whether the actions set for improvement have been met at the next observation. As a result, on a minority of occasions, assessors and tutors do not make the required improvement quickly enough.

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