

North Lincolnshire Council

Community learning and skills

Inspection dates

18–21 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate provider

- Until recently, leaders and managers have not taken effective action to address the underperformance of teachers.
- The proportion of learners achieving their qualifications is low.
- Attendance is poor for too many learners.
- Too many current learners are making slow progress towards achieving their qualifications and learning goals.
- Too many learners on community learning courses do not develop new skills and knowledge.
- Leaders and managers do not analyse data well enough to identify the areas of their service that require the most urgent attention.
- The provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance is weak.
- Leaders and managers do not evaluate the quality of provision accurately enough.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not of a consistently high standard.

The provider has the following strengths

- Family learning programmes have a clear purpose and a positive impact on improving family life in local communities.
- Managers have developed a culture for learning that is inclusive and supportive for learners, many of whom face significant barriers to education and employment.

Full report

Information about the provider

- North Lincolnshire Council provides adult learning courses in dedicated education centres, community venues and children's centres across the area that it serves. A third of the provision consists of courses in English, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), mathematics, information and communication technology, and a number of vocational areas including business administration and supporting teaching and learning in schools. Two fifths of the provision is non-accredited community learning and around a quarter is family learning.
- Compared with the rest of the country, North Lincolnshire is an area of high social deprivation. The unemployment rate is higher than that in the Yorkshire and the Humber region. A significantly lower proportion of the population is qualified at level 2 and above than across England as a whole. In 2017/18, compared to the national average, a lower proportion of school leavers in the local authority area achieved GCSEs at grade 5 or above in English and mathematics.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the pace at which leaders and managers address staff underperformance in order to improve rapidly the quality of teaching and increase the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications.
- Rapidly improve the progress that learners make towards achieving their qualifications and learning goals, by:
 - ensuring that learners are enrolled on appropriate programmes, given their existing level of skills and knowledge
 - taking swift and appropriate action when learners fall behind.
- Significantly improve attendance by making sure that all staff have high expectations for learners' attendance and that they take effective action when learners do not attend.
- Revise the community learning curriculum so that it meets local needs and priorities, enables learners to develop new skills and knowledge, and is not over-reliant on courses provided solely for recreational purposes.
- Improve leaders' and managers' understanding and use of data to identify weaknesses in the provision, so that they can take swift and appropriate action to make improvements.
- Improve the evaluation of the quality of provision by ensuring that leaders and managers identify the key weaknesses and take effective action to address them.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - ensuring that teachers accurately identify the starting points of learners and use this information to plan to meet learners' individual needs
 - ensuring that teachers monitor closely the progress that learners make towards achieving their qualifications and learning goals
 - sharing the good practice of high-performing teachers with their colleagues.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- For too long, leaders and managers have been slow to address the persistent underperformance of staff. This has led to a low and declining proportion of learners achieving their qualifications. Recently, current leaders have started to challenge underperforming staff more effectively. Current leaders provide appropriate professional development for teachers, focusing on the skills that teachers need to improve. This has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, managers are still not addressing successfully the poor attendance of learners. As a result, too many current learners do not attend well enough and make slow progress.
- Leaders' and managers' use of self-assessment is not sufficiently precise. Leaders underestimate the impact that weaknesses have on the quality of education that learners receive. Leaders have a quality improvement plan, but it does not allow them to tackle the key areas for improvement well enough. Too many actions in the plan do not link directly to improving the quality of provision. As a result, leaders and managers place insufficient focus on swiftly improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for learners.
- Leaders have not developed the community learning curriculum sufficiently to ensure that it meets local needs. The community learning programme includes too many courses that learners attend purely for recreational purposes. As a result, too few learners develop new skills and too few progress onto accredited courses.
- Managers do not analyse information about learners' attendance and achievements well enough. They have systems for collecting data, but do not use the data well enough to identify areas for improvement. As a result, they have failed to address some key weaknesses indicated by the data, such as the very low attendance rates of too many learners.
- Leaders and managers have developed strong relationships with local partners, such as schools and charities. Through these links, they enrol adults who would otherwise not be in education.
- Leaders have ensured that the family learning programme has a clear purpose that is linked to local need. Staff work well with parents to develop skills in supporting their children to read and to eat more healthily. As a result of the family learning programme, many learners have higher aspirations and ambitions for their future. A small number of learners have progressed from family learning courses into accredited learning, particularly with the ambition of becoming teaching assistants.

The governance of the provider

- Since the previous inspection, governors have overseen a significant decline in the quality of education that learners receive, resulting in a very low proportion of learners achieving their qualifications. Until recently, governors have not had sufficient oversight of the adult education service and have, therefore, been unable to hold leaders and managers to account.

- Very recent changes to the strategic oversight of the adult learning service have strengthened arrangements for governance. The appointment of a council employee strategic lead for the service and the introduction of a progress board enable council leaders to have a more effective overview of the performance of the service. However, it is too early to see the impact of this change on the quality of provision.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding officer (DSO) is appropriately trained. All staff undertake appropriate training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty before starting their roles in the adult learning service. This training is repeated annually.
- Learners feel safe and know whom to contact if they have any concerns. Staff understand the referral process well. The DSO keeps detailed records on the small number of concerns raised by staff relating to the safety of learners. Where appropriate, the DSO carries out follow-up activity with learners at risk to ensure that they are safe.
- Leaders have produced a 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan that is detailed and includes appropriate links to local services that provide support when needed. However, the risk assessment does not fully reflect specific local risks that learners face.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not of a consistently high standard across the different strands of the provision.
- Too few teachers ensure that learners who do not attend lessons receive sufficient support to catch up. As a result, learners whose attendance is poor make slower than expected progress towards achieving their qualifications or learning goals. These learners make up a significant proportion of the cohort.
- Teachers do not consider carefully enough what learners can already do when planning teaching. On community learning courses, teachers set targets for learners to enable them to measure learners' progress. However, these targets are often generic and do not take sufficient account of learners' existing skills and knowledge. This means that learners often make slow progress in developing new knowledge and understanding and, in many instances, focus mainly on practising existing skills. Many learners attend community learning lessons either for recreation or to socialise, and they often enrol on the same courses repeatedly.
- Teachers do not monitor learners' progress well enough. They rely too much on learners' self-reflection when assessing progress.
- Most teachers provide encouraging feedback that enhances learners' motivation. On a few courses, teachers provide constructive feedback that enables learners to improve the quality of their work. Learners on level 2 courses in photography and on supporting teaching and learning in schools make particularly good use of the feedback that they receive about how to improve their work. On community learning courses, however, feedback is not specific enough.

- Staff understand their learners' personal circumstance well. They pay close attention to learners' personal health, welfare and support needs. Teachers and learning support assistants work effectively together to support learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make progress in developing their independent learning skills.
- On family learning courses and on the majority of vocational courses, teachers give useful explanations and use engaging learning activities and interesting resources to develop learners' skills and understanding. On these courses, learners become confident in their knowledge and understanding and develop important skills.
- Teachers of family learning courses help learners to develop their parenting skills effectively. For example, parents quickly develop their confidence in reading aloud. Parents who are most in need of support attend welcoming and helpful sessions. Teachers focus on the needs of families, carefully planning helpful activities that support the development of young children. As a result of the supportive family learning programmes, parents become better able to support their children with their homework.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

- The proportion of learners who attend lessons is low and has been low for too long. Leaders, managers and teachers do not routinely challenge learners to improve their attendance or to attend lessons punctually. As a result, too many learners make slow progress.
- Too many learners do not develop well enough the skills that they need for work. Except for those studying towards employability, English and mathematics qualifications, learners do not receive support to prepare them for work. As a result, too few learners progress from their learning into education, employment or training once they complete their course.
- Too many learners are on courses that are not sufficiently challenging. Too often, learners study courses in subjects that they already understand well. As a result, too many learners are not inspired to acquire new skills or improve their existing skills.
- Most learners do not receive information or advice to help them make careful, informed choices about their next steps. Staff signpost a small number of learners to external partners for careers advice.
- Learners who attend their lessons have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy their courses and take pride in their work. They work cooperatively with staff and peers, and develop good teamworking skills.
- Learners who complete their work do so to an appropriate standard. Learners studying towards qualifications in photography, supporting teaching and learning in schools, and English produce work that is of a good standard. However, too many learners do not hand work in on time.
- Staff make effective use of the diverse backgrounds of their learners to promote fundamental British values and a harmonious culture in which learners are tolerant of different views. Many of the learners attending courses have migrated to the United Kingdom. Through the use of skilful support from teachers, learners who are new to the region have a better understanding of life in modern Britain.

- Learners benefit from carefully selected additional activities. Teachers ensure that these activities are relevant to learners' areas of study. They use external agencies well to provide guest lectures and specialist teaching. For example, learners on courses in supporting teaching and learning in schools benefit from learning about child exploitation to help them recognise the signs of risk on their work placements in schools.

Outcomes for learners

Inadequate

- Too many learners make slower than expected progress based on their starting points and length of time on programme. The proportion of learners currently in learning who are beyond their planned end date is too high. Too many learners, particularly on community learning courses, do not develop new skills and knowledge.
- Too many learners do not achieve their qualifications, particularly on courses in functional skills mathematics, and ESOL. The proportion of learners achieving their qualifications has been declining for the last three years and is now very low.
- Too few learners move onto employment, training or higher-level education after they have completed their programmes.
- Leaders and managers do not analyse what learners do after they have completed their course. They do not check that learners who progress into work or education remain in their jobs or on their courses. As a result, leaders are unaware of whether learners' needs are being met.
- A high proportion of the small number of learners on GCSE English courses achieve at grade 4 to 9.

Provider details

Unique reference number	53589
Type of provider	Community learning and skills
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,250
Principal/CEO	Sandra Simmons
Telephone number	01724 862217
Website	www.northlincs.gov.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	-	683	-	292	-	2	-	-
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:	Not applicable							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the adult learning manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent position paper and quality improvement plan, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

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