

Highfields Community Association

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Russ Henry, Her Majesty's Inspector

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Highfields Centre
96 Melbourne Road
Leicester
LE2 0DS



Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From March 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of adult learning provision which began to be funded from August 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly funded to deliver adult learning provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Highfields Community Association (HCA) began offering directly funded adult learning programmes in January 2018. It offers non-accredited courses designed to attract learners who have not previously engaged in education programmes. These courses are in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), information and communication technology, and garment making. In 2018/19, HCA provided courses to around 230 learners.

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant adult learning provision that has a clearly defined purpose? **Insufficient progress**

Managers have established a clear purpose for learning programmes. They have developed courses that are designed to attract disadvantaged or isolated local people who have not engaged in learning before. Programmes aim to help individuals develop their confidence, so that they can move on to employment or further learning.

Quality assurance arrangements are too informal and have not led to high-quality learning programmes. Managers have conversations with staff and learners about their programmes, but they have not implemented any procedures to review the quality of the curriculum. Although managers discuss how well staff are teaching, they do not gather first-hand evidence of their performance, and meetings do not result in improvement actions or professional development activity.

Managers have largely left course planning in the hands of tutors, who do not take sufficient account of local needs in their planning. Managers recognise the need to provide courses that help learners to move on to further learning or employment. They have begun discussions with a local college to help with this, but these discussions are at an early stage. They have not yet engaged with employers to identify local skills gaps. As a result, managers have not taken a lead in developing the content of training courses.

Managers have not yet implemented their plans to find out what happens to learners when they finish their programmes. As a result, they have been unable to gauge the effectiveness of programmes. They do not know what elements of courses have been useful to learners, or what has been less helpful. As a result, they have not yet been able to use this information to improve the effectiveness of the curriculum.

Managers have built effective relationships with a number of local partners. They work with partner organisations to develop coordinated bids for funding. Their partnership work also helps them to identify potential learners and to ensure that courses complement other local programmes.

Managers have acknowledged weaknesses identified by inspectors and have already developed a plan of action to rectify them.

How much progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals? **Insufficient progress**

Staff do not always plan teaching well. Although tutors prepare schemes of work for each course, they do not make enough use of them to plan lessons, particularly for ESOL programmes. Tutors assess learners' starting points using a combination of discussions and written assessments. They use these assessments to set rudimentary but realistic targets for learners. However, these targets do not relate to the objectives of programmes or the sequence of learning identified in schemes of work.

Tutors do not monitor learners' progress sufficiently. Although tutors provide one-to-one support, mark written work, and give clear and helpful oral feedback, they do not record learners' progress within learners' individual records. This makes it difficult for tutors, learners and managers to understand the progress that learners make and what they need to do to improve.

Tutors have appropriate subject and teaching expertise for their roles. However, they do not have enough opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge further. Classrooms and computer rooms are well equipped, and teachers have access to appropriate learning resources.

Tutors are supportive and caring and help learners to overcome personal, social and language barriers to learning. As a result, learners enjoy attending the centre and are motivated to make progress. Most learners increase their self-confidence. Many learners describe how they have become more able to complete basic tasks, such as making a doctor's appointment or sending an email to enquire about employment.

Most tutors provide interesting and culturally appropriate activities. For example, in one lesson the tutor helped a group of older women to discuss oppression and

domestic abuse. The tutor skilfully explained complex ideas to the learners in Gujarati and Hindi before supporting them to discuss the topics in English.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Insufficient progress

Managers have failed to meet a number of key safeguarding requirements. Staff, including the designated safeguarding lead, have not undertaken appropriate safeguarding training. Managers have not completed risk assessments for vulnerable individuals. They have not established appropriate mechanisms for recording and reporting safeguarding incidents. However, the designated safeguarding lead is aware of her duties and is taking action to resolve these weaknesses. Learners are not at immediate risk of harm and feel safe when attending the centre.

Despite the fact that most learners do not speak English well, policies and procedures that apply to them are available only in English. Although staff explain the content of these procedures to them, learners do not have a comprehensible document to refer back to.

The head of adult services has undertaken safer recruitment and safeguarding training. All staff have undergone pre-employment checks including identity, career history and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

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