

# Inspection of South West Regional Assessment Centre Limited

Inspection dates: 14–16 September 2021

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Good</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

South West Regional Assessment Centre (SWRAC) operates from a head office near Wimborne in Dorset. It has two other Dorset-based centres in Dorchester and Boscombe and a training centre in Liverpool. SWRAC offers education programmes for young people comprising traineeships and post-16 vocational programmes. It provides preparing for adulthood programmes for learners with high needs. The offer comprises a pathways programme and preparing for life, preparing for work and get into work programmes. The Liverpool office provides week-long construction site skills programmes throughout the year designed to help unemployed adults gain work in the construction sector.

At the time of inspection, 22 learners were studying the post-16 programme and 28 followed traineeships. Seventy learners were studying on provision for learners with high needs programme and 16 adults were on the weekly construction site skills programme.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Most learners benefit from curriculums that are relevant to them, and to employers. This is because leaders and managers work closely and effectively with a range of external stakeholders, including employers, charities, Jobcentre Plus and the probation service, when developing curriculums.

A consistent characteristic of all learners' experience at SWRAC learning centres is that they feel safe and know who to contact about any personal concerns. They are well aware of the support available from staff and seek it out when needed. They know that, with the exception of safeguarding concerns, anything they discuss privately with staff will be in confidence.

Learners with high needs like attending the learning centres in Boscombe and Dorchester and have made new friends. Inspectors met with learners with high needs who had overcome significant barriers to learning, particularly related to anxiety, as a result of the care and support provided by SWRAC's staff. However, inspectors also identified learners with high needs whose curriculum was not tailored to meet their individual needs and who had not made the progress they were capable of.

Learners' behaviour in all learning centres is good, although a very small number of younger learners struggle to moderate their language. Nevertheless, all learners respect their learning environments and value the programmes they are following.

Adult learners are highly motivated. They have a positive attitude to their learning and are keen to complete their course and go on to gain employment in the construction industry. Tutors have set clear expectations for adults' attendance and punctuality, which learners respect. The vast majority are punctual and recognise the importance of good timekeeping.

Most learners on the education programmes for young people are highly motivated to complete their courses and take full advantage of the opportunity to return to learning. They particularly like the small class sizes which allow them to have good levels of one-to-one support from tutors. Most learners' work is at an appropriate level and most have made progress throughout the year. It is clear how the content and presentation of their work has developed over time. Learners who have recently completed their course felt well prepared to enter the world of work.

All learners benefit from an improved knowledge and understanding of safeguarding, including e-safety and sexual harassment. They can articulate this clearly and in some depth.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

The curriculum for adult learners is aligned closely to increasing the number of workers in Merseyside joining the construction industry. The curriculum is aimed

particularly at increasing participation by learners who are unemployed or on low incomes. The curriculum is focused tightly on providing learners with the skills and knowledge needed to pass the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) test and gain a CSCS card. This card is a mandatory requirement for people wanting to work in construction. The curriculum includes useful qualifications which the large majority of learners complete successfully before they take the CSCS test. Employers speak positively about the effectiveness of the training the adults receive.

Managers and tutors ensure the curriculum is taught in a logical order so that learners build their skills progressively. Tutors concentrate strongly on safe working practices in construction which are a key component of their CSCS test. As a result, learners have a good understanding of how to maintain their health and well-being at work.

Tutors are well qualified and experienced in the construction sector. They use their knowledge well to present real-world examples which prompt discussion and learning. Tutors check learners' understanding of topics effectively through one-to-one meetings, group discussions and quizzes. Tutors use the information they gain during these activities to identify and correct learners' misunderstandings. Learners value the individual contact with their tutor and enjoy the opportunity to discuss topics in greater depth because it improves their understanding.

Learners' self-confidence grows as a result of participating in group discussions. They share their views and ask questions. They feel safe and know who to contact about any concerns. Tutors develop adult learners' understanding of fundamental British values and the importance of mutual respect and tolerance throughout the course. Learners are aware of appropriate conduct when on site, such as how they should speak to women and the inappropriateness of wolf-whistling.

Managers and tutors do not routinely take into account the prior learning of the very few learners who come with recent construction industry experience. All learners follow the same curriculum. Consequently, it is not ambitious enough for this small group. Learners do not have sufficient, impartial careers advice and guidance. A very few learners remain unaware of how to apply for jobs once they have gained the CSCS card.

A small proportion of learners complete the course but are not ready to sit the CSCS test. Tutors now provide these learners with appropriate support to pass the test at a later date. The total number of learners gaining the CSCS card has increased steadily over the past two months, but managers recognise that the number doing so is still too low.

The curriculums for young people successfully re-engage young learners who may not have attended mainstream education or been excluded from it. The curriculums improve learners' self-confidence and readiness for employment, as well as their proficiency in English and mathematics. Learners develop and apply new skills, knowledge and behaviours. Those who have completed their programme feel well prepared for the world of work.

Most tutors use the outcomes of thorough assessments well at the start of learners' programmes to personalise and develop the curriculum for each young learner. Even so, a few have programmes of learning which are not sufficiently individualised. Learners on the traineeship programme who already have experience or qualifications exempting them from parts of it develop new skills and knowledge through self-study modules which are provided online. For example, one trainee has completed units of a health and social care programme at level 3.

Most learners' attendance at the learning centres is regular, which is commendable given that most have not attended an education setting for some time or have poor experiences of mainstream education. Recent starters say they are becoming more engaged with learning and feel that they will thrive at the centre. They are aware of the counselling services available from provider staff. All centres have confidential contact systems which the learners are aware of and value.

Learners' work is generally at an appropriate standard. Most learners believe they have made significant progress, but a few feel that their progress has only been modest.

Many learners cannot describe their current targets in their independent learning plans because they have too many of them. Consequently, they cannot measure the progress they are making.

The quality of the provision for careers advice and guidance varies too much between the different centres and is not good enough in some. Learners complete a monthly self-assessment of their skills throughout the programme, but tutors do not take this into account consistently when planning future lessons.

The curriculum for learners with high needs provides well-structured programmes of learning designed to prepare learners for independent living and work. However, although the curriculum content is broad and schemes of work are detailed, tutors are not tailoring the curriculums well enough to meet the individual needs of each learner. This is because, aside from English and mathematics, staff are not using the outcomes of assessments at the start of learning programmes effectively to identify what learners already know and can do before they start their course. Consequently, all learners follow the same curriculum irrespective of their prior knowledge, skills or behaviours. This means the most able learners find learning insufficiently challenging.

Learners compile comprehensive portfolios of work that meet the criteria for the programme they are following. However, while teachers can assess in general terms how learners have overcome significant barriers to learning, have improved their self-confidence or can self-regulate, they cannot do so in relation to each learner's starting points. Nevertheless, the quality and presentation of learners' work is generally good and at an appropriate level for the expected standard for entry level 3 to level 1 learners.

Learners with high needs have useful opportunities for work experience as part of their curriculum but not all of them are ready or able to take part in these placements. Instead, these learners do 'virtual' work experience at home by completing research booklets. Too many lack close enough support by tutors to do this well.

Most tutors provide constructive feedback which helps learners improve their writing and spelling skills. Most teachers have had good specialist training relevant to the high needs sector.

Leaders, managers and staff have made strenuous and successful efforts to improve SWRAC's safeguarding arrangements following an Ofsted monitoring visit in March this year. Leaders have focused strongly on devising and implementing an effective new system for monitoring and reporting safeguarding concerns. They have provided face-to-face and online training for staff and governors to increase their understanding and application of all aspects of safeguarding.

Leaders have devised a range of new strategies to improve how they monitor and manage the performance of their programmes. These are evolving slowly from a narrow approach focused primarily on ensuring staff conform to the letter of policies. The aim is ultimately an approach which evaluates, for example, how well policies help learners develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours in practice.

Leaders now have a comprehensive programme of meetings for staff and managers which ensures they understand the provider's aims and plans. Leaders are actively ensuring that staff's workload is appropriate and manageable. Leaders provide good support for the mental health of staff, including face-to-face and online counselling. Staff feel very well supported, valued by leaders and included in decision-making.

Governance arrangements are improving, with much that is work in progress. For example, a new cycle of management reports is imminent for the advisory board, which is responsible for governance. These reports will use a greater range of key performance indicators. A specialist with expertise in programmes for learners with high needs is in the process of being appointed to further strengthen the already well-qualified and appropriately experienced advisory board.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The provider's designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is well qualified and has a very good understanding of current legislation and expectations. The DSL has correctly made 23 referrals to external agencies, such as the police and social workers. Leaders complete a range of appropriate checks when appointing new staff to make sure they are suitable to work with learners and apprentices. They maintain and update a single central record containing relevant staff information.

Staff have received appropriate, face-to-face training in safeguarding. The training

usefully included contextualised information relating to the learners present on each site.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Tailor the curriculum for each learner with high needs. Use the outcomes of thorough assessments at the start of their programmes to identify their individual needs and establish what each already knows and can do before they start their course.
- Substantially increase the number of learners completing the site skills course and then taking and passing the CSCS test.
- Refine and reduce the number of targets set for young learners in their independent learning plans so they can more easily measure the progress they are making.
- Ensure all learners receive effective, impartial careers advice and guidance.

## **Provider details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	54501
<b>Address</b>	Merley House Merley House Lane BH21 3AA
<b>Contact number</b>	01202 848099
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.swrac.ac.uk">www.swrac.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Adrian Gunner
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	23 February 2017
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Not applicable

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

Nick Crombie, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tracey Zimmerman	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christine Lacey	Ofsted Inspector
Esther Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Lois Knight	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Humphreys	Her Majesty's Inspector



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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
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