

# Short inspection of The Learning Curve

Inspection dates:

13–14 October 2021

## **Outcome**

The Learning Curve continues to be a good provider.

## **Information about this provider**

At the time of the previous inspection, The Learning Curve provided courses for learners who mostly lived in West Wiltshire. Most learners were adults. Since 2018, The Learning Curve has been part of the Eat That Frog group and courses for adults are now provided by Eat That Frog. Directors of Eat That Frog are now trustees of The Learning Curve. The number of learners has reduced considerably. All The Learning Curve's learners are now young people aged from 16 to 18 from the Torbay area.

Programmes are targeted at young people who have not recently been in education, employment or training. These learners mostly need a significant amount of help to prepare them for further education or employment. They attend a short, eight-week programme (the LEAP programme) designed to help them progress into further training, or programmes that are run in association with The Prince's Trust. At the time of inspection, six learners aged 16 to 18 were attending the first LEAP programme taught face to face. All previous programmes had been taught remotely.

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

Staff and teachers treat learners with respect, empathy and kindness. They understand that their learners' personal circumstances or poor experiences of education have led to them becoming isolated, unable to study for a qualification or to get a job. Learners told inspectors that the teachers' and staff's attitudes towards them strongly influenced their decision to return to education.

Learners enjoy the education and training provided by The Learning Curve because the staff and teachers seek their views and understand the support, guidance and help that they need. They enjoy the varied activities that their teachers provide and feel more able to face their next steps into employment or further training as a result of their time at The Learning Curve.

Teachers help learners develop their self-esteem and confidence through frequent feedback and by giving learners responsibilities. For example, they set learners the task of identifying the behaviours that they want each other to adopt during the

programme. Learners told inspectors that completing this task made them feel good about themselves. Teachers demonstrate their respect for the learners by helping them adhere to the standards and behaviours they set for themselves and praising them when they succeed.

Learners know about the next steps that they can take following their time at The Learning Curve as a result of good careers advice and guidance. Teachers and staff carefully consider each individual learner's aspirations and help them to make informed choices about how to achieve them. For example, staff keep abreast of training available in the area, arrange visits to the local college and organise independent careers interviews when necessary.

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

Teachers are highly adept at helping reluctant learners to enrol on a programme at The Learning Curve. In their early contact with learners, they adapt their methods of communication to find the best way of motivating the learners to attend. As a result, some learners who had not left their house for many months are now attending face-to-face sessions.

Learners make good progress and most move on to education or employment as a result of an ambitious curriculum. Staff take time to identify clearly the barriers that have prevented learners getting a job or taking part in education. They use this information well to choose activities and methods of support that prepare learners to make their next step. Teachers closely monitor learners' progress in developing new skills, knowledge and behaviours. They provide frequent, useful feedback which tells learners when they have succeeded.

When planning the curriculum, leaders strike a good balance. They offer activities that raise learners' confidence, resilience and aspirations and other activities that provide learners with insight into the next steps they could take. For example, learners practised their ability to collaborate and negotiate during an activity to design and produce drinks from apples they had picked. This was followed by an informative and motivational talk from a successful designer of electronic games who, when younger, had faced similar difficulties to the learners. This talk was part of the valuable weekly 'How did I get here?' programme of visiting speakers.

Leaders have established an ethos based on the aim of the Eat That Frog group, 'to enable people to identify and overcome their barriers to live a more fulfilled life'. They demonstrate this intention by employing teachers and support staff who have experience of working with disadvantaged young people. All those they employ share the leaders' commitment to helping these young people improve their lives. Leaders support teachers' professional development through a programme of training on assessment and teaching, and information, advice and guidance. However, this does not provide unqualified and inexperienced teachers with a sufficiently broad range of teaching techniques quickly enough.

Leaders demonstrate their ambition for their learners by regularly reviewing whether their programmes successfully improve learners' lives. They look carefully at what their learners move on to after their programme and use this information to continue to make improvements. They closely monitor the LEAP programme and recognise that, since they have only once run it face to face, it will need to continue to develop. For example, they have identified that some learners would benefit from better English and mathematics teaching and intend to employ a specialist in the near future.

Leaders have successfully maintained The Learning Curve's focus on providing education and training for disadvantaged people as it has moved into the Eat That Frog group. They work very closely with agencies, such as local authorities, to find the people who would benefit most from attending a programme. Leaders respect The Learning Curve's commitment to provide education to people in Wiltshire. They have not been able to maintain this during the COVID-19 pandemic but are committed to restarting this in the near future.

The trustees of The Learning Curve set a clear strategic direction and ensure that staff and curriculum are strongly focused on providing opportunities for disadvantaged people. They achieve this by drawing on their long experience and personal commitment. However, trustees also take operational roles in the day-to-day management of The Learning Curve. Consequently, there is no external governance to provide leaders with critical support and challenge.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders responsible for safeguarding have suitable qualifications and experience to carry out their responsibilities effectively. They regularly review their arrangements for keeping their learners safe. For example, leaders have appointed a member of staff at each site to act as the lead officer for safeguarding local learners. This now provides a rapid response to any concerns about their learners' safety.

Leaders use their relationships with other organisations well to keep themselves and their staff up to date on safeguarding matters. They also use these links effectively to obtain information to include in the curriculum for their learners.

Leaders carry out the necessary checks to assure themselves that members of staff are suitable to work with young learners. They provide frequent training to keep staff up to date on developments in how to keep their learners safe.

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

- Provide learners with teaching that develops the English and mathematics that will help them progress to the next stage in their education.

- Provide inexperienced teachers with training which rapidly increases their range of teaching techniques.
- Establish an external group with relevant expertise to support and challenge leaders.

## **Provider details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	54877
<b>Address</b>	91 Union Street Torquay TQ1 3AG
<b>Contact number</b>	01225792500
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://Learningcurve.org.uk">Learningcurve.org.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Ian Powell
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent Learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8–9 June 2016
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since The Learning Curve was judged to be good in June 2016.

The inspection team was assisted by one of the trustees, 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

Steven Tucker, lead inspector

Alun Maddocks

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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