

Inspection of City Lit

Inspection dates: 9 to 12 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Adult learning programmes

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Information about this provider

The City Literary Institute (City Lit), established in 1919, is an adult and community learning provider with charitable status located in Covent Garden. City Lit offers approximately 5,000 part-time courses annually to 24,000 adult students across London and beyond. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the college has retained a significant online curriculum, mainly in classical and modern foreign languages, humanities and creative writing.

Most students are on level 1 programmes that are not qualification based. A wide variety of courses are offered in visual, performing arts and languages and make up the majority of the provision. A smaller proportion of students are on level 2, 3 and 4 programmes in counselling, complementary therapies, access to higher education, foundation programmes in art & design, teacher training and digital technologies. A small proportion of students study English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), functional skills, digital skills and GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics.

The college offers specialist programmes in speech therapy and programmes for students who have learning disabilities. The college's centre for deaf education caters for students who are deaf or have an acquired hearing loss. British Sign Language is offered from introduction to level 6.

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

Students thrive by being part of a vibrant college community. They take part in a rich and extensive range of courses and exceptional enrichment activities. Students

flourish because of the new knowledge and skills they learn, the social networks they develop and the positive impact attending college has on their well-being.

Students are inspired to learn because they are very well taught by highly qualified tutors who are often experts in their field and passionate about their subject. Students enjoy learning in state-of-the-art facilities with high-quality professional-standard resources. Students immerse themselves in their subject area. They are rightly proud of what they achieve and the high standards of work they produce.

As a result of taking courses at City Lit, students become exceptionally well-motivated to participate in their communities and wider public life. For example, hearing and deaf ESOL students collaborated to raise money for a children's charity. History students take up voluntary roles in galleries, and museums and as guides on historical walks, after inspiring visits to galleries.

Students excel in their studies because staff provide highly effective support that equips them very well for their next steps once they complete their course. For example, art students whose ambition is to attend university receive highly effective preparation for their interviews. Art students completing advanced practice courses benefit from visits by working artists who teach them about the commercial applications of, for example, 2D and 3D art. As a result, students who wish to move straight into creative careers are well prepared to do so.

Students prosper due to the highly supportive and respectful environment in which they learn. Tutors very effectively promote the value of listening to different views and respect for different cultures. As a result, students fully embrace college life and develop positive and respectful relationships with their tutors and each other. Students feel safe.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the skills needs they meet. They work very effectively with stakeholders, who value the role that the college plays in offering flexible, accessible and relevant courses that meet a varied range of needs within the capital and beyond. Leaders, managers and staff ensure that the curriculum remains focused on both the skills that employers need most, and the skills that individuals need to gain and remain in employment.

Leaders and managers make good use of employers' views about the curriculum they offer. For example, managers have adapted their complementary therapy courses to meet the needs of hospices that support residents with long-term and palliative care. Managers have contextualised their British Sign Language course in order to train Metropolitan Police Officers so that they can work with members of the deaf community more effectively. They offer a unique course to train lip-reading teachers to help overcome the national shortage in this area. Consequently, leaders

have a thorough understanding of the skills needed by employers and design courses so that students gain the skills they need.

Leaders and managers very effectively engage industry professionals in the design and teaching of the curriculum. For example, gemmologists, editorial directors, and animation experts all contribute to the design of assessment projects that students complete. Consequently, students acquire skills that are industry-relevant, and result in gaining commissions, working with agents or securing permanent employment.

Employers are highly positive about the college and are strong advocates on its behalf. They highly value the knowledge, skills and behaviours that students acquire. Governors understand well the unique nature of the college and the various skills needs that it aims to meet through the curriculum. They challenge leaders and managers effectively on the robustness of their plans.

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

Leaders have created a very well-considered curriculum to meet closely the needs of distinct groups of students and which embodies the concept of lifelong learning. Students explore their interests and ambitions and develop their talents to a high level. They maintain positive well-being through studying the arts, music and languages. Leaders provide valuable specialist provision through ESOL courses, learning disability education and learning for the deaf community. They enable students to gain new professional skills in courses such as counselling and digital skills to help them to succeed in their careers and professional development.

Tutors very effectively use information about what students know and can do at the start of their course to plan a curriculum based on their individual abilities and goals. They then sequence subject content logically and effectively. They start with strategies that give students the confidence to study, and the curiosity to know more. In arts subjects, they ignite students' creativity and then give them the tools and techniques to progress successfully. For example, in drawing, students are taught how to make marks, before studying the form of objects, people, proportions and perspectives. They progressively build their skills throughout their course, with many achieving more than they thought possible.

Tutors skilfully give very clear and effective explanations of key concepts. They use a range of highly effective teaching techniques to help students remember what they have been taught. For example, in dance, tutors model movements and ask students to mirror these and then apply these into practice in more-complex sequences. In Spanish, tutors skilfully use recaps, questioning and group discussions to check students' understanding. Through continually revisiting what they have learned, students retain and build their knowledge very well and improve their fluency in conversation.

Tutors very effectively identify what actions students need to take to improve their work. In subjects including art and counselling, tutors are very skilled at teaching

students how to reflect upon and critique their own and their peers' work. They explain to students how to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of their written work. They provide effective written feedback to students so that they understand any errors they may have made and know how to correct them. As a result, students make significant improvements in the quality of their work over time.

Staff provide helpful and thoughtful support to students with additional learning needs. They set up teaching rooms to meet the needs of partially sighted students. Deaf students studying digital courses are supported well by interpreters. Managers have worked very effectively with staff to improve the achievement of students who require additional support.

Students produce exceptionally high-quality work. For example, in counselling, students conduct detailed primary and secondary research to write impressive evaluative assignments. Art students demonstrate a high level of proficiency in their crafts and photography students produce industry-standard work.

Students achieve exceptionally well. A very high proportion of those on courses that lead to qualifications pass their exams. Many students go onto courses where they extend their knowledge and skills further in their area of interest. Students who take courses to help them gain employment secure jobs or become self-employed.

Across all of the provision, leaders, managers and staff provide exceptional opportunities for students to participate in activities beyond the requirements of their course. A high proportion of students participate in these activities and develop the confidence, resilience and knowledge they need to thrive. For example, ceramics students exhibit work at a psychiatric hospital. Visual arts students have worked in collaboration with deaf students to celebrate deaf people's portraits and showcased these in college exhibits.

Leaders and managers take very effective action to improve and maintain the quality of the provision. For example, they ensure that tutors have expert subject knowledge and experience in their sector. Leaders and managers support tutors very effectively to develop their teaching skills. For example, through frequent classroom visits, tutors receive effective feedback that helps them improve. Tutors benefit from a variety of training that develops their teaching skills. As a result, tutors are highly effective in their practice and teach courses that students enjoy and by which they are inspired.

Governance arrangements are effective. Governors have highly relevant experience that they bring to their roles, including in education and business. They use this well to support and challenge leaders and managers and to guide the development of the college. Governors are well informed about the college's strengths and weaknesses. They provide effective scrutiny of the provision and challenge to the senior leadership team that ensures that students benefit from high-quality provision, whatever they study.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers ensure that there is a positive safeguarding culture at the college. Safeguarding arrangements are underpinned by a range of up-to-date policies, including a 'Prevent' duty risk assessment. There is a coherent safeguarding structure, with managers at school-level having safeguarding responsibilities led by suitably qualified designated safeguarding leads.

Leaders and managers follow safe recruitment and selection processes that ensure that staff are suitable for their roles. Pre-employment checks are recorded on a well-kept and up-to-date single central record. Leaders, managers and staff take prompt and effective action to safeguard students and promote their welfare where needed.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130401
Address	Keeley Street Covent Garden London WC2B 4BA
Contact number	02038713111
Website	www.citylit.ac.uk
CEO	Mark Malcomson
Provider type	Special designated institution
Date of previous inspection	6–9 December 2016
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal, 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

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