

# Inspection of Hartlepool Borough Council

Inspection dates: 5 to 8 December 2023

<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>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

Hartlepool Borough Council's jobs and skills team is part of the community hubs service, which is part of the council's adult and community-based services department. The great majority of the service's funding comes from the Tees Valley Combined Authority. Since its previous inspection, the service has stopped using subcontractors and has withdrawn from the delivery of apprenticeships. At the time of the inspection, there were 120 learners on non-accredited learning for inclusion courses and 202 on skills programmes. The largest single curriculum area is English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Other curriculum areas include functional English and mathematics, digital skills and non-accredited courses in health and well-being subjects. The service also offers vocational distance-learning courses at levels 2 and 3.

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

Learners benefit significantly from the additional services available at the community hubs where they attend their lessons. They can access support for their physical and mental health, receive financial advice and use the resources available in the library and digital suites.

Learners' attendance at lessons is high. Despite facing many barriers, such as the need to deal with multiple agencies to resolve resettlement issues, learners prioritise attendance at their education classes.

Learners thrive in the calm and orderly learning environments created by the service. In lessons, teachers check up on the welfare of their learners and show care and attention towards them. As a result, learners feel safe and settle into their lessons quickly.

Learners display high levels of mutual respect and tolerance towards each other as they interact in the classrooms. Learners on ESOL courses, with a wide range of national, cultural and religious backgrounds, work harmoniously together in their shared endeavour to learn the English language.

Most learners achieve their learning goals and qualifications and progress on to the next level of study, either with the service or with another provider. A growing number of learners use their English skills to gain employment, with examples of learners on ESOL courses finding work in local schools as teaching assistants and as support workers for the jobs and skills team. Learners on social inclusion courses, such as volunteering, grow in personal confidence and take on roles with voluntary and community groups.

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

Leaders and managers have designed a curriculum that is targeted effectively at the most disadvantaged residents in the borough. These include the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers, those with low skills, and those who feel excluded from the wider community through social isolation and the barriers of poor mental and physical health.

Leaders and managers work well with partners to shape the curriculum to maximise the use of resources and to avoid duplication. For example, they meet regularly with the local further education college to plan ESOL provision to ensure that learners can progress from community provision to the higher-level curriculum on offer at the college.

Leaders and managers recognise that they still need to develop the ESOL curriculum further as it currently lacks any vocational options, such as a pathway into employment course, particularly for learners at levels 1 and 2. They also acknowledge

that the numbers of learners on functional English and mathematics courses are too low, given the need for this provision in the borough.

Leaders and managers adapt the curriculum well in response to feedback from their key partners and from learners. For example, they have introduced a longer ESOL course at entry level 2 that combines all three areas of speaking and listening, reading, and writing that are more usually delivered as separate courses. This provides learners with greater contact time with their teachers and opportunities to continually practise and master these skills.

Senior leaders provide effective governance through their understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the provision. They help to shape and strengthen the strategic direction of the service, such as when the decisions were taken to withdraw from the use of subcontracted providers and stop the delivery of apprenticeships.

Teachers are intellectually curious practitioners who think hard about the best ways to teach their subjects. For example, they have introduced a stand-alone unit specifically on phonics to help learners to bridge the gap between pre-entry and entry level 1. This helps learners to build their skills in reading, writing and speaking from the sound and pronunciation of groups of letters.

Teachers sequence the curriculum in an order that enables learners to develop their skills and knowledge in a sustainable way. Learners on a digital skills course on the use of spreadsheets are taught the basic principles associated with spreadsheets, such as formatting cells, before moving to more advanced aspects such as inputting data to generate charts and the referencing of cells. As a result, learners develop an increased understanding of key concepts and how to apply technical skills over time.

Teachers set high expectations with their learners about how they want them to approach the subject. ESOL teachers encourage learners to speak English extensively in the classroom. As a result, learners gain greater confidence in speaking English and get more opportunities to practise their pronunciation of words.

Teachers identify the starting points of their learners accurately. They use this information well to plan the content of their sessions so that they address the key areas for development of their learners. For example, on the entry level 3 English course, teachers identify that learners need to work more on developing their writing skills, as opposed to their reading skills, so prioritise more writing exercises to enable learners to practise these skills.

Teachers plan and use an effective range of methods to assess their learners' progress. For example, learners' fluency and confidence in using the English language are identified through short written assignments to check the way that learners structure sentences and through mock examinations where learners can practise speaking to the rest of the class about a prepared topic. As a result, teachers can pinpoint gaps in learners' knowledge and their grasp of essential skills and suggest ways learners can improve them.

Teachers provide effective feedback that enables learners to improve the standard of their work. They guide learners on the supporting teaching and learning in schools remote learning course to improve their work by applying theories such as those of Piaget and Maslow to the contexts of their placement schools. This ensures that learners embed key concepts into their long-term memory and develop greater confidence in the application of theories to practical contexts.

Teachers on the social inclusion courses do not set sufficiently precise course aims to enable learners to measure their own progress. For example, on a floristry course the learning aim is 'to arrange flowers', with no description about the type of arrangements the learners should achieve or what specific skills they will develop. Despite this lack of precise target-setting, teachers on these courses do record the progress that learners make through video and photographic evidence so that the learners' achievements are captured securely.

Teachers and managers organise a wide range of enrichment activities to enable learners to integrate into the local community and to gain a sense of its history and culture. For example, learners on ESOL courses visit the National Museum of the Royal Navy in Hartlepool to understand the town's maritime past.

Careers advice is effective and impartial. Careers staff discuss in detail the next steps open to learners and encourage them to make positive progression decisions when they have completed their courses. For example, learners on ESOL courses attend a freshers event at the beginning of the autumn term held in partnership with the local further education college. This enables them to talk to employers and local voluntary organisations about future employment and volunteering opportunities.

At the time of the visit, the classrooms at one of the centres were too cold for learners and not very conducive to learning. Classrooms are very functional, with a lack of subject-related wall displays to inspire learners on ESOL and functional skills courses and to reinforce what they have been taught.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Enhance the ESOL curriculum to include vocational options so that learners studying at a higher level are better prepared for potential employment.
- Extend the service's engagement work with target communities so that more learners are recruited onto functional English and mathematics courses.
- Improve the way that teachers of social inclusion courses set learning aims for their courses that are challenging, specific and measurable so that learners understand what skills and knowledge they can develop.

- Ensure that classrooms are heated properly and that they provide stimulating environment where learners can immerse themselves in relevant subject materials and displays.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	52137
<b>Address</b>	Hartlepool Jobs and Skills Community Hub Central 124 York Road Hartlepool TS26 9DE
<b>Contact number</b>	01429 868616
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hartlepooljobsandskills.com">www.hartlepooljobsandskills.com</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Scott Campbell
<b>Provider type</b>	Local authority
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 December 2013
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Not applicable

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the lead officer skills, 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

Charles Searle, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Hunsley	Ofsted Inspector
Jack Bullock	Ofsted Inspector

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