

# Inspection of Kent Community Learning and Skills

Inspection dates: 4 to 7 June 2024

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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

## Information about this provider

Kent County Council Community Learning and Skills (KCCCLS) is located within the Education and Young People's Services Directorate and provides learning opportunities for adults, young people and families across Kent. A significant proportion of courses are non-accredited and focus on three key themes that align to the council's strategic aims. These are to improve lives whatever people's circumstances, to promote social renewal and to increase the economic well-being of individuals, families and communities.

At the time of the inspection, there were 13,605 learners enrolled on adult learning programmes. KCCCLS provides a wide and varied curriculum offer, from pre-entry level to level 4. Adult learners follow accredited programmes in English, mathematics and vocational learning. Non-accredited courses aim to provide adults with the skills needed to gain and sustain employment or further learning. There were 193 young learners who are not in education, employment or training, taking education programmes for young people, with most on work ready (employability) or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. There were four learners in receipt of high needs funding. In addition, 100

were on apprenticeships. Apprentices were taking either the level 3 business administrator or level 2 customer services practitioner standards.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy learning in a very inclusive community. Staff are committed to improving the life chances of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable adults and young people in the county. Staff effectively promote the benefits of diversity. For example, apprentices on the customer service practitioner standard think carefully about the way they work with people with disabilities. Tutors of adult counselling help adult learners understand the psychological impact of sustained discrimination. Learners and apprentices are tolerant of others and celebrate one another's differences.

Learners and apprentices engage with staff and one another positively. Staff build effective working relationships with learners. Staff interact professionally with learners, leading to mutual respect. For example, on the work ready programme, learners show high levels of respect for their peers. When participating in role plays about handling difficult customer service scenarios, learners respond to one another very well. They listen very intently to opposing views.

Learners are taught about topics that are helpful for their lives. Tutors add extra content that makes courses useful. For example, in Spanish, adult learners discuss current world events in lessons. Young learners on the supported internship programme learn about personal finance. Tutors focus on topics such as budgeting to support learners towards independent living.

Learners and apprentices feel safe and understand about healthy relationships in a way that is relevant to them. Young ESOL learners learn about consent and the differences in law between the UK and their home countries. Adults studying counselling know how to develop and manage professional relationships with their clients.

Too many learners and apprentices do not attend lessons frequently enough. The attendance targets that staff set learners and apprentices are too low. Staff do not follow up effectively with those who are absent from lessons. Leaders recognise the need to intervene earlier to ensure that any absence issues are swiftly addressed, particularly for those who face considerable barriers to attending. Leaders have recently appointed an attendance officer to work on improving attendance. However, it is too early to assess the impact of their work.

The small cohort of young learners do not receive a good enough quality of education. This impacts on their experience. In too many cases, tutors do not provide constructive feedback on young learners' work. As a result, they do not improve the standard of their work. Too many young learners do not achieve their learning goals or make the progress of which they are capable.

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

Leaders and managers design a wide range of learning programmes from pre-entry to level 4, to meet the very diverse needs and aspirations of learners in the region successfully. Leaders design courses that enable most learners and apprentices to develop the essential knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to participate in their communities, and to move on to further study or employment. For example, leaders have carefully designed an ambitious ESOL curriculum, which responds to the needs of the changing groups of learners. There is a sharp focus on enabling learners to survive and thrive in the United Kingdom so that they and their families can go on to contribute to their local communities and wider society.

Leaders work with partners to plan a curriculum offer that meets the economic needs of Kent and Medway well. They collaborate effectively with a range of organisations. For example, they work with Kent Further Education (KFE) to avoid unnecessary duplication of courses in the area.

The client group (governing board) has recently been strengthened. Positive steps have been taken to further broaden the range of skills and experiences of the group, by appointing new members. For example, members now have a clear understanding of the local economic needs in Kent. The client group has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the provision. For example, it acknowledges that retention rates are too low, and asks useful questions to leaders about how these can be improved. As a result, the client group has started to provide leaders with effective support and challenge to improve the quality of the provision.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken successful actions to improve the quality of apprenticeships. They have adjusted entry criteria so that apprentices are able to access the curriculum. Leaders have also improved employer engagement. Most employers attend apprentices' progress reviews, meaning that managers can support apprentices in the workplace effectively. These changes have improved apprentices' learning experiences. There has been a considerable improvement in the number of apprentices successfully completing their apprenticeships.

Leaders, managers and tutors plan programmes of learning in a logical order. They make sure that learners and apprentices develop essential knowledge and skills before moving on to complex concepts and tasks. For example, ESOL tutors work with learners at entry level to gradually increase their confidence and accuracy in speaking with others about everyday matters such as food. At level 2 and 3, staff help learners to become confident in giving short presentations on topics such as healthy eating, and debating complex subjects such as whether chocolate is always bad for you.

Most tutors use effective teaching strategies and provide helpful and well-planned support for learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Learners with high needs receive effective individualised support such as through one-to-one

teaching. Young learners on supported internships receive valuable support from job coaches to help them develop employability skills. As a result, learners who need extra help make good progress.

Across the provision, leaders make sure that tutors are well-qualified and experienced. Many have worked at KCCCLS for a long period of time and are experts in the subjects they teach. They use their expertise and experience to teach learners effectively, including in online sessions. Most tutors present information clearly, using helpful examples. These examples help learners and apprentices to understand new and complex topics and subject-specific terminology. For example, in mathematics, tutors continuously revisit definitions of compound and simple interest. They then support learners to apply their understanding through related questions. Most learners are developing new knowledge that they can recall over time.

Across the provision, tutors use skilful questioning to check learners' and apprentices' understanding of what they learn. Tutors identify any misconceptions in their understanding. They take actions to make sure that they correct misunderstandings. For example, in ESOL lessons for unaccompanied asylum-seeking learners, tutors correct learners' mispronunciation of words. They remind them of the change in vowel sounds at the end of words. As a result, learners develop their speaking skills well.

Tutors support apprentices to apply and practise their knowledge and skills in the workplace well. They help apprentices to make connections between what they learn in lessons and the tasks they complete at work. For example, learners on the customer services practitioner level 2 standard learn how to adapt their body language and facial expressions when working with customers effectively. They learn how to develop active listening skills to respond suitably to meet customers' needs. As a result, they develop a wide range of valuable skills and behaviours that help them become competent and responsible in their customer-facing job roles.

Staff do not make sure that learners and apprentices receive a wide enough range of opportunities to take part in activities beyond their learning programme or apprenticeship. Consequently, learners and apprentices do not benefit from a sufficient range of opportunities to broaden their wider interests.

Staff provide most learners and apprentices with useful careers advice and guidance. They make sure that learners on work ready programmes complete careers skills scans and discuss different career options open to them. Apprentices training in level 3 business administration receive industry-specific careers advice from their employers. As a result, most learners and apprentices develop the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about their futures. Most learners and apprentices, including those who were not in education, employment or training, go on to positive destinations. For example, they move on to further and higher study, apprenticeships or to voluntary or paid work.

Staff make sure that learners and apprentices develop knowledge and strategies to cope with stress. Adults on response (employability) programmes use meditation

and breathing techniques they learn on their courses to relax before job or education interviews. Apprentices on level 3 business administration value the advice staff provide to help them manage the challenges in their training and jobs. Most learners and apprentices know how to keep themselves mentally healthy.

Tutors do not routinely highlight specific skills gaps in young learners' English work. For example, on ESOL programmes, tutors do not highlight spelling, punctuation and grammar errors in learners' work. As a result, learners are not improving these essential skills.

On certain pre-entry, entry and level 1 functional skills courses, the achievement of adult learners who speak English as an additional language is low. However, several factors outside of the providers' control have had an impact on outcomes. A high proportion of refugee learners were moved at short notice, and therefore could not continue their courses. As a consequence, leaders have developed shorter, more flexible programmes. This has resulted in improved retention this year, and it has also led to a higher proportion of learners completing functional skills qualifications successfully.

Leaders make sure that staff receive highly effective professional development. For example, staff are required to attend specific training sessions following on from quality assurance visits. In addition, staff attend sessions about the specific teaching techniques that help learners to remember what they are learning. As a result, staff continuously improve their teaching skills.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Make sure that young learners receive useful feedback about how they can improve their work, so they make the progress of which they are capable.
- Make sure that a higher proportion of learners and apprentices attend their lessons and take swift actions to support those who do not attend.
- Make sure that learners benefit from opportunities to broaden their wider talents and interests.

## Provider details

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<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Jude Farrell
<b>Provider type</b>	Local authority
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11 to 13 December 2019
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Hi Kent

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the curriculum manager, 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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