

# Inspection of City of York Council

Inspection dates: 10 to 13 December 2024

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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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>
Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

City of York Council provide education and training across the city, operating as York Learning. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,658 adult learners enrolled on a range of courses, including those leading to qualifications and tailored learning. The majority of learners were studying courses in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).

Seventy-four apprentices were enrolled, with most on the level 3 early years educator programme. Sixteen young learners were enrolled on a 'routes to success' course, which provides education programmes for young people who have significant barriers to learning. Ninety-three learners with high needs were studying with six partner organisations, the largest being Blueberry Academy and Tang Hall Smart.

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

Learners and apprentices value highly the learning experience and support that they receive from tutors. They work in a respectful environment, where they grow in confidence. Learners and apprentices know that tutors genuinely care about their well-being and success. Adult learners on courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and functional skills mathematics are enthusiastic and look forward to their lessons at the provider.

Tutors set clear expectations for learners and apprentices regarding behaviour and work ethic. Tutors appreciate the barriers that many learners and apprentices face in their lives and are proactive in providing support while promoting high expectations. Young learners enrolled on 'routes to success' are supported well to manage their emotions, where appropriate, and to develop the behaviours that they need for employment. Tutors support them well to identify triggers and suggest coping strategies and relaxation techniques.

Most learners and apprentices attend well. Tutors monitor attendance closely and know the reasons when learners and apprentices do not attend. Where adult learners are unable to attend sessions due to work commitments or personal circumstances, tutors ensure that they catch up with the learning that they have missed. On 'routes to success', tutors work closely with parents, carers and specialist agencies to support learners with barriers to attendance and put support plans in place to make improvements.

Learners and apprentices benefit from a comprehensive personal development curriculum. Tutors support apprentices to develop as people and practitioners. Apprentices cover topics such as healthy relationships and staying physically and mentally healthy.

Learners and apprentices feel safe and very well supported. They know what to do if they have a safeguarding concern and have confidence that leaders and managers will act on concerns. Learners with high needs understand how to keep themselves safe online and understand the risks and consequences of sharing inappropriate images. However, too many learners with high needs do not have a sufficiently well-developed understanding of the potential risks of extremism and radicalisation, and tutors do not make adult learners on accredited courses sufficiently aware of local risks that may affect them.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear purpose for the provision that they offer. They provide courses to improve the lives of residents in York, who have few qualifications, low skills and low wages. Leaders and managers align their curriculum offer with York Council's strategic plan and the skills needs of the region. They provide a wide range of learning opportunities that are relevant to local skills needs and a social prescribing route for referrals from partners for targeted individuals to

improve their well-being and mental health. Teaching takes place in accessible community locations across the city, such as local libraries, schools and children's centres.

Experienced and well-qualified tutors plan the curriculum logically for learners and apprentices. On 'routes to success', tutors teach mathematics by beginning with simple number calculations, such as adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing. They then move on to more complex number work, such as fractions and decimals. When learners are confident with these, tutors move on to teaching ratios and proportions.

Most tutors use a range of effective teaching methods to teach learners and apprentices. On the level 3 early years educator apprenticeship, tutors provide clear explanations when introducing new topics and use skilful questioning to help apprentices recall their new knowledge. Apprentices apply their learning quickly to their workplaces. Tutors who teach learners with high needs break learning down into manageable steps and use step-by-step instructions to reinforce learners' understanding.

Most tutors ensure that learners and apprentices have sufficient time to fully process and understand key aspects of learning. However, a very few tutors who teach learners with high needs and adult learners on functional skills mathematics courses do not give learners sufficient time to fully understand key information before moving on to a further topic.

Most learners and apprentices make good progress. Adult learners on ESOL courses learn vocabulary, such as 'stir, boil' and 'spread' as they begin to develop key language skills to help them to prepare for future jobs in hospitality. Learners with high needs learn how to maintain an effective personal hygiene routine, including daily showering and using hygiene products, such as deodorant and shampoo. Learners on 'routes to success' and learners with high needs improve their independence skills, develop in confidence and become more resilient to deal with everyday challenges and to prepare for adulthood.

Most learners and apprentices achieve their qualifications on the vast majority of courses. Many progress to the next level of study, further education or employment. On a few courses, however, too many learners do not achieve. This includes learners with high needs on functional skills English and mathematics courses at one subcontractor. Leaders and managers have put an action plan in place to provide comprehensive support to the subcontractor. Many adult learners in English, mathematics and ESOL leave their course early. In some instances, this is because they move to a different part of the country, where many continue their studies at other providers. Some other learners on English and mathematics courses face significant barriers to learning, such as mental health and well-being issues. Leaders and managers have introduced extensive mental health support for these learners, and early indicators show that it is having a positive impact.

Tutors provide effective support to learners and apprentices with additional learning needs. They adapt teaching skilfully to meet learners' and apprentices' needs and use effective teaching strategies to help them learn and remember new knowledge. For example, tutors who teach adult learners on ICT courses provide accessible technology to learners with degenerative sight loss.

Leaders and managers have rigorous oversight of the quality of teaching and assessment, including that of subcontractors. They complete a range of useful activities, such as visiting lessons, reviewing learners' work and talking with learners, apprentices and tutors. Leaders and managers use this information to make targeted improvements and to inform staff training.

Leaders and managers rightly recognise the need to develop high-quality work experience and encounters with the world of work for learners on 'routes to success'. They have implemented strategies to support learners to prepare to attend a work environment successfully, such as providing them with virtual reality headsets. Learners use these to experience a range of work environments and to view the behaviours required in the workplace.

Tutors provide useful careers information and guidance to learners and apprentices to support them to make informed decisions about their next steps. On tailored learning courses, tutors signpost adult learners to local colleges, where they can continue their studies at a higher level. Learners with high needs are supported well by specialist careers staff and job coaches, who help them with searching for jobs and preparing for interviews.

Leaders have effective governance arrangements in place. The board of governors includes external representation from other local authorities, who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to meetings. Members of the board scrutinise reports that are provided for discussion on key subjects, such as retention and achievement in functional skills mathematics and level 3 early years educator, and provide challenge to leaders about how they are going to improve outcomes.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Increase the number of opportunities for young learners to undertake high-quality work placements and to engage with the world of work.
- Improve learners with high needs' understanding of extremism and radicalisation and the potential risks that they may face.
- Strengthen adult learners' understanding of local safeguarding risks.

- Implement effective actions to improve the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications in English, mathematics and ESOL.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	55476
<b>Address</b>	West Offices Station Rise York YO1 6GA
<b>Contact number</b>	01904 555987
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.yorklearning.org.uk">http://www.yorklearning.org.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Angela Padfield
<b>Provider type</b>	Local authority
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	November 2019
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	HE Blueberry Academy Choose2 Youth Limited United Response AD ASTRA The Toolbox Project Tang Hall Smart

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of service, 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

Jacque Brown, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Karen Anderson	His Majesty's Inspector
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