

The Learning Trust, Hackney

Re-inspection report

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Type of provider: Hackney Local Authority

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Introduction

The previous inspection in June 2008 judged overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management to be satisfactory. Equality of opportunity was good. Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) was good, and programmes in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages were satisfactory. Provision in family learning was inadequate.

The outcome of the reinspection is as follows:

Subject area	Original grade	Re-inspection grade
Family Learning	4	3

Context

In 2008/09, nearly 450 learners participated in family learning programmes. Some 89% of learners were female and 69% were of Black or minority ethnic heritages. Currently courses are located in nine schools, two children's centres and one community venue across Hackney. Five of these courses are family learning, literacy and numeracy (FLLN) and five are wider family learning (WFL) programmes. The programme is managed by a family learning manager, supported by a FLLN manager and a WFL coordinator and project officer. Courses are taught by six part-time tutors employed by the Trust and teaching staff from contracted providers.

Key findings

- Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners in family learning lessons develop sufficiently their self-confidence to ask questions and express ideas. They develop skills that enable them to better help their children with homework and deal with their children's misbehaviour more effectively.
- Learners have good opportunities to achieve accreditation on most courses. Retention rates are high and improving at 94%. The overall success rate for accredited and non-accredited courses is good at 86%.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. An increasing proportion of lessons are good or outstanding. In many lessons, learners work together well in pairs and small groups, showing high levels of concentration and application. However, some lessons are dominated by the teacher and provide insufficient opportunity for learners to take the lead.
- Course and lesson planning are good. Learning materials are very well prepared and presented. Teachers make good use of leaflets and books of local and historical interest. Tutors set useful and interesting homework tasks which parents can share with their children. Learners receive constructive and positive feedback on their performance.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not sufficiently adapt their language and teaching style to meet the needs of those learners with limited English language

skills. 'Mother tongue' interpreters are often available to support learners in the class, but they receive insufficient guidance from tutors on how best to support learners.

- Initial assessments for learners are thorough and used to place learners on the courses most appropriate to their needs. Learners receive a helpful induction that enables them to settle readily onto the programme. All learners receive clear information about their course and can record their learning activities in a useful learner handbook.
- Many individual learning plans are completed well by learners and teachers and used effectively to monitor the learner's progress. However, some learning targets are too vague to help the learner identify what actions they should take to progress towards realistic short or long-term goals.
- Information, advice and guidance are incorporated very well into courses. Two dedicated guidance staff work very effectively with tutors and they visit learners on all courses to discuss further study or employment opportunities. Progression rates to further learning are increasing: they were 23% in 2006/07; 26% in 2007/08; and 35% in 2008/09.
- Family learning programmes are well managed. Communication between the Trust's course managers and tutors of contracted providers is good. These tutors benefit from much support and advice and the sharing of good practice through peer observations and tutor forums.
- The Trust has developed strong partnerships with many local schools and children's centres. Managers have identified the needs and interests of their users in order to strengthen the relationships between parents and children and improve the achievements of their children at school. However, service managers recognise the need to extend the range of existing courses and locations.
- The self-assessment process is comprehensive and the report is accurate in highlighting the Trust's main strengths and weaknesses. Many of the judgments and grades are the same as those awarded by inspectors. Procedures for observing teaching and learning are rigorous.
- The capacity to improve family learning provision is good. The Trust has made good progress in improving those areas for development identified at the previous inspection. Managers monitor rigorously the quality improvement plan and many of its targets have been accomplished.

What does The Learning Trust, Hackney need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all teaching staff, including primary school teachers employed by contractors, are trained appropriately to teach adults within the context of family learning.
- Establish clear communication between teachers and support staff, for example interpreters, so that they work together more effectively in lessons to support learners' needs.

- Further develop the skills of tutors in the use of individual learning plans, ensuring that all individual targets agreed between teachers and learners are consistently specific and measurable.
- Extend the current family learning provision to offer wider learning opportunities in a greater number of locations and at more varied times.

Inspectors explored the following themes as part of this re-inspection.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How effectively has the self-assessment process and the post-inspection action plan improved the quality of provision and raised standards of learners? Significant progress

The self-assessment process is thorough and involves staff at key phases during the year. Provider and curriculum area self-assessment reports (SAR) are integrated into an overall SAR for the service that evaluates strengths and areas for improvement accurately. It focuses appropriately on key performance indicators, particularly on learners' outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning, and it incorporates the views of learners well. However, providers are not consulted as closely as they might be in this final report. New providers are familiarised with the self-assessment procedures and training is given on how to produce an evaluative self-assessment report. However, some providers' SARs lack detailed information, for example on learners' outcomes. Although SARs are subject to scrutiny by managers and the service's supervisory board, senior managers acknowledge that the process would benefit from a degree of external scrutiny.

Staff have worked with great enthusiasm and commitment to address the key weaknesses reported in family learning at the last inspection. The post-inspection action plan has realistic targets and it is monitored regularly by curriculum managers and senior managers. Considerable progress towards these targets has resulted in an improvement in the quality of family learning provision.

Outcomes for learners

How much progress has been made to improve outcomes for learners? Significant progress

Learners' outcomes have improved consistently and show significant progress. Overall success rates increased from 76% in 2006/07 to 85% in 2007/08, and rose further to 90% in 2008/09. This is a result of the improved retention rates which have increased steadily to 95% in 2008/09, the highest ever rates for the service. High achievement rates have also been maintained at a time when the proportion of courses offering formal accreditation increased greatly. Outcomes for learners from minority ethnic groups and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are

as good as those for other learners. Attendance rates show a steady trend of improvement and were 86% in 2008/09.

End-of-course learners' satisfaction surveys show that 99% of learners feel their learning experience is at least satisfactory or better, with 90% rating it good or outstanding. Learners benefit in many ways from their courses: they gain skills and confidence; parents are better enabled to work with their children on their school work; and many valuable employability skills are acquired. Progression rates for learners are good. For example, advice and guidance work with ex-offenders has led to 75% progressing to further education, employment or training.

Quality of provision

How well are staff using individual learning plans and target-setting to meet the learning needs of individual learners? Reasonable progress

Staff training on the effective use of individual learning plans (ILPs) has taken place for tutors. A well-produced and comprehensive tutors' handbook contains templates for staff to use. Managers audit the quality of ILPs by direct scrutiny and when observing lessons. ILP exemplars are reviewed at tutor meetings to share good practice. Generally, ILPs contain measurable and specific targets that are negotiated and agreed with learners. In the best examples, learners achieve targets that improve the quality of their lives. For example, learners now feel able to mix more widely with individuals from other cultures and others have gained the confidence to travel on public transport. However, a minority of teachers set targets that are too general and lack specificity.

Learners' satisfaction surveys report that 86% of learners understand the purpose of ILPs. For learners attending short courses lasting for a few weeks only, their ILPs appropriately contain group targets as well as individual targets.

Quality of provision

What strategies are in place to improve the quality of accommodation for teaching and learning sessions? Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection in June 2008, accommodation for learning sessions in a broad range of curriculum areas was identified as a key area for improvement. Inspectors reported that adults attending family learning sessions often had to use furniture that was too small and designed for infants. Although some accommodation is cramped, almost all accommodation used for adults attending family learning courses is now fit for purpose. For example, primary school classrooms used for family learning sessions are now equipped with adult furniture. Learners' satisfaction surveys indicate that 85% of learners rate their classrooms and equipment as good or outstanding.

The Trust has tightened up its commissioning and contracting procedures. All new venues are visited prior to courses starting to ensure accommodation is suitable. The

standard of accommodation is monitored regularly. However, many programmes run in the most deprived areas of Hackney, where the standard of accommodation is no better than satisfactory in some outreach venues.

Leadership and management

Are quality assurance procedures being used consistently to improve the quality of teaching and learning? Significant progress

The previous inspection highlighted the need to consolidate and extend systems to continually improve provision as a key area for improvement. Quality assurance procedures are rigorous and are now applied consistently across all curriculum areas. The SAR highlights an increasing proportion of outstanding and good sessions over the past two years, although one third of observed sessions were judged to be no better than satisfactory in 2008/09. End-of-course learners' satisfaction surveys report that 95% of learners rated the quality of teaching and learning as good or outstanding in 2008/09.

Comprehensive procedures are in place for observing the quality of teaching and learning. Lesson observations take place regularly for all tutors, and across all subject areas, by well-trained staff. To ensure consistency of judgment, observation findings are moderated by service managers and in some cases by staff from other boroughs. Regular joint observations also take place. For the very few teachers whose sessions are judged to be inadequate, support and effective training is provided, and improvements are reported. Actions to improve teaching practice are agreed between teachers and observers after lesson observations, but procedures to monitor and evaluate the impact of these actions are not followed up systematically.

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