

# Walsall Adult and Community College

## Inspection Report

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Unique reference number: 55258

Name of lead inspector: Cliff Rose HMI

Last day of inspection: 22 Jan 2010

Type of provider: Local authority  
Hawbush Centre

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## Information about the provider

1. Walsall Adult and Community College (the college) was formed in August 2009 to deliver the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded provision in Walsall previously offered by the College of Continuing Education (CoCE) and Walsall Community College (WCC). The CoCE was formerly a division of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council (WMBC) and WCC was formerly a charitable trust and company limited by guarantee with much provision delivered by community associations. The new organisation is a division within WMBC's Neighbourhood Services Directorate and the principal is an executive officer of the council.
2. The college offers a range of adult learning opportunities including employer-responsive provision through a Train to Gain contract, employment-support provision through a flexible New Deal contract, learner-responsive provision leading to qualifications, and learning for social and personal development. The college continues to work in partnership with community associations.
3. Currently 4,479 learners attend courses at the college. Of these 2,061 are attending courses under adult learner-responsive provision and 1,753 learners are attending courses in learning for social and personal development. Courses are offered in 10 subject areas in 9 community venues and 42 schools. In addition, 310 Train to Gain learners attend work-based provision. Approximately 30% of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 73% are women. The majority of learners are aged 19 or over.
4. Walsall includes areas with high levels of deprivation. Unemployment is 2.7% above the national average. In 2008/09, 44% of school leavers achieved five or more A\* to C level GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, compared to a national average of 50%. Of the 150,000 working population 42,000 have qualifications below level 2 and 32,000 have no formal qualifications.
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the college:
  - Bloxwich Community Partnership
  - Brownhills Community Association
  - Frank F Harrison Community Association
  - Manor Farm Community Association
  - Park Hall Community Association
  - Palfrey Community Association
  - Pool Hayes Community Association
  - Sneyd Community Association

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Young learner provision: Further education (16 to 18)	183 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Learning for qualifications Learning for social and personal development	3,269 part-time learners 4,068 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain	532 learners

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3
Learning for qualifications	
ESOL	Grade 2
Learning for life and work	2
Learning for qualifications in employment	
Education and training	Grade 3
Learning for social and personal development	
Community learning	Grade 3

## Overall effectiveness

6. The overall effectiveness of the college provision is good. The combination of improvements to the two predecessor colleges and the recent changes within the new organisation demonstrate a good capacity for further improvement. Programmes in English for speakers of other languages and in learning for life and work are good. Learners wishing to gain qualifications do increasingly well, although gaining qualifications for some of those on work-based programmes have been slow until recently. Learners gain in confidence and develop useful skills both for work and for improving their life chances. Although much of the teaching and learning is good, too much of it is satisfactory. The range of programmes meets the needs of current learners.

7. Partnership working, especially with the local community associations, is good and is a particular feature of the provision. The care, guidance and support that learners receive are good. Leadership and management are good. The strategic direction of the new organisation and the management of change as it moves toward a new unified management structure are good.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Overall success rates are good on leading to qualifications. In 2008/09 combined success rates for all qualifications across the merged colleges was 87% and well above national rates. Overall learner success rates on the employer responsive programme, Train to Gain, in 2008/09 at 79% are satisfactory. Courses for social and personal development retention, achievement and overall success rates have significantly improved over the last three years.
- Much teaching and learning is good. However, there is still too much satisfactory teaching. In the better sessions, active learning activities engage and challenge learners, learners understand the tasks set and receive constructive feedback and develop independent learning skills. In the weaker sessions, learning is tutor led and tutors do not always plan well for individual learning activities nor recap and reinforce learning sufficiently.
- Across the provision tutors are insufficiently reflective and self critical of their teaching and learning. They are required to evaluate each learning session but many tutors simply record the lesson activities. Tutors have insufficient guidance to enable them to reflect on the impact of their teaching approaches.
- The college has productive partnerships with a wide range of voluntary and statutory community partners. They are particularly effective in widening participation for marginalised communities. Effective partnership working between the college and the eight subcontracted community associations provides access to adult learning across the borough. The college has recently established a family learning network to work more strategically with learners from the community.
- The provision is not yet sufficiently linked to the wider regeneration agenda. Processes for exploring community needs are limited at present. They often rely on requests from current learners or responding to requests from other agencies, rather than a coherent curriculum offer with identifiable pathways between programmes to reflect the needs of the wider community in Walsall.
- Employers are not sufficiently involved in the planning and design of the employer-responsive provision. They are not fully, or formally, involved in the review process and receive insufficient information about their employees' progress or how best to exploit workplace opportunities to support learning programmes and facilitate assessment. The college recognises this and plans are already in place for improvements.

- The strategic direction of the college is good. The new organisation is becoming more closely aligned to other council departments. Its board has good representation from elected members, community associations, local business and other interested parties and actively supports the new principal, providing appropriate leadership, direction and challenge. The strategic plan sets detailed, ambitious and challenging targets to be achieved by 2013.
- The management of change is good. Progress toward a new management structure has progressed rapidly. Staff are kept well informed and are consulted at each stage. Senior managers from the predecessor organisations have key interim posts, responsibilities and detailed work plans designed to complete the new structure quickly and efficiently.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Safeguarding and health and safety policies are up to date and comprehensive. All staff are subjected to enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks (CRB). Safeguarding officers are based in centres with the highest concentrations of vulnerable adults. Informative posters are widespread. Staff undergo appropriate safeguarding training. Reporting and referral procedures are clear. Key staff have booked training on the provider's vetting and barring scheme responsibilities.
- Equality and diversity is satisfactory overall. However, there is insufficient promotion in the curriculum. All staff undergo mandatory training on equality and diversity and treat learners fairly. However, with few exceptions, there is little active promotion of equality and diversity in the classroom and it is insufficiently embedded in the curriculum.
- Quality improvement arrangements do not include sufficient observations of key aspects of learner education and training. Observation of teaching and learning sessions is well established. However, observations to monitor other aspects, such as enrolment, initial assessment, induction or review, are insufficiently developed.

### What does Walsall Adult and Community College need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of good teaching by supporting tutors to; plan sessions that meet the needs of all learners; develop their skills to critically reflect on their lesson and develop their ability to effectively recognise and record learners' progress and achievement.
- Continue to develop appropriate material for the virtual learning environment and other staff resources to assist staff in the active promotion of equality and diversity in the classroom.
- Complete and implement quality improvement arrangements to observe and monitor all aspects of learner education and training and produce action points to drive continuous improvement.

- Continue to implement the employer engagement strategy and ensure employers are involved in learners' training.
- Implement a plan to link community provision to the wider regeneration agenda.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- the support given when needed
- the help and encouragement from tutors
- being treated as an individual
- the small class sizes which enable each of them to get the most from their tutor
- the flexible individualised learning to suit their needs
- the help the course gives them to understand what their children do at school and how they can help them with their homework
- the wide choice of courses available with course timing to suit their needs
- the opportunity to gain employability skills
- the social contact
- the chance to gain qualifications
- improving their numeracy skills.

#### What learners would like to see improved:

- programme organisation
- the time between induction and starting of NVQs
- course advertising
- more literacy and spelling courses
- equipment and resources in off-site provision
- the time spent on paperwork
- better access to computers.

### Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

#### What employers like:

- the support given to their learners
- the way the learning outcomes benefit the work place
- the learners' increased confidence
- the good relationship with the assessors.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the feedback from the provider
- more opportunities for scheduled feedback.



## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

8. Outcomes for learners have shown a steady improvement since each of the predecessor colleges were last inspected and are good overall for the new establishment. Each had well-established self-assessment procedures, which for some years have been linked to a common quality improvement plan (QIP), that has driven forward improvements in the provision in Walsall. The latest QIP and the strategic plans for the new college address all identified areas for improvement and set appropriate and challenging targets for the future. Work to apply the most appropriate quality improvement arrangements from the predecessor colleges to the new organisation and to identify any gaps in the arrangements are well advanced. Joint work on financial management and management information systems predated the formation of the new college by over a year and are enabling the rapid transition to a new common management structure designed to support further improvements to the provision.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

9. Outcomes for learners are good. Overall success rates are good on courses leading to qualifications. In 2008/09 combined success rates for all qualifications across the merged colleges was 87% and well above national rates. The College of Continuing Education success rates were significantly higher at 93.5%.
10. Overall learner success rates on the employer responsive-programme, Train to Gain, in 2008/09 at 79% are satisfactory. Walsall Community College learner success rates are higher at 84%. In business administration 39% of current learners have already completed their NVQ, well within their planned end dates.
11. Overall success rates on community provision have significantly improved over the last three years to 93% in 2008/09. Retention was maintained at the very high level of 96% and achievement improved from 90% to 97%. However, the borough's systems for recognising and recording progress and achievement are not used with sufficient rigour to provide consistently accurate results.
12. The majority of learners from minority ethnic groups perform as well if not better than their peers with success rates well above national rates. The college is fully aware of the need to improve the gaps in performance for a small number of learners on some programmes. It has also identified the need to improve the numbers of male learners which is low. Throughout the college merger, retention and enrolment numbers for minority groups have been sustained. The difference between the success rates for adult male and female learners are low.

13. The majority of learners significantly improve their economic and social well-being. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners integrate into their local community. Train to Gain learners develop good work-related skills to support their career development. Approximately 35% of teaching assistants starting as volunteers progress to employed positions. Parents on family-learning programmes improve their numeracy skills, increase their understanding of how their children learn, and are better able to support them. Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD) develop good employability skills but have limited opportunities for employment.
14. Learners feel safe attending courses in the borough. Their induction includes health and safety and anti-bullying policies. Staff regularly remind learners to adopt safe working practices. Provider staff carry out health and safety risk assessments on all venues and tutors risk assess learning activities.
15. Learners on learning for life and work courses enjoy a particularly wide choice of enrichment activities. Many learners in community learning enjoy the significant social and health benefits of their learning. Classes for ESOL enable learners to make a better use of local services.
16. Learners on the learning for living and work programme make a positive contribution to the community through activities such as fundraising, dance and drama performances and creating community gardens. Community provision learners are also involved in performances, exhibitions and carnivals across the borough.

## The quality of provision

Grade 3

17. Much teaching and learning is good; however there is still too much satisfactory teaching. In the weaker sessions, learning is tutor led, tutors do not plan well for individual learning activities and often fail to re-cap or reinforce learning. Many tutors are not confident using information and learning technology (ILT) in their sessions. There is an over-reliance on worksheets in accredited provision. Tutors are insufficiently reflective and self critical of their teaching and learning. Although required to evaluate each learning session, many tutors simply record the lesson activities. Tutors have insufficient guidance to enable them to reflect on the impact of their teaching approaches. To overcome this the provider is already recruiting a manager and staff to run an inspired teaching project.
18. Assessment and feedback are satisfactory. In accredited provision learners receive good written and verbal feedback and sufficient access to regular assessment. Good use is made of formative assessment to promote learning in employer and community provision. The recording of progress reviews is weak in employer-responsive provision. The college has clear guidance on the calculation of success, retention and achievement for non-accredited provision and standardised forms are in place. However, learners and tutors do not always understand the process to recognise and record learner progress and its usage is inconsistent. Learning objectives are often too broad making the

recording of learners' progress difficult. Initial and diagnostic assessments are satisfactory.

19. The range of provision satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of learners and employers. Most programmes offer learners a good range of choice and progression opportunities. The ESOL venues are well placed for accessibility and learner safety. In community provision 'bitesize' taster sessions present good opportunities for engagement and careful planning enables the tasters to lead into further learning. Assessor visits are planned flexibly to suit the needs of learners and employers. The borough recognises that the employer engagement strategy is underdeveloped and has yet to be implemented. Employers are insufficiently involved in the design and planning of training and reviews of learners' progress.
20. The college has productive partnerships with a wide range of voluntary and statutory community partners including Links to Work, Walsall community transport, Surestart, schools, libraries, voluntary and specialist organisations, community and residents' associations, housing and the police. Much of the partnership work is targeted at hard-to-reach learners. It works particularly well with these organisations to widen participation for marginalised communities providing good social cohesion. Effective partnership working between the college and the eight subcontracted community associations provides access to adult learning across the borough. The college has recently established a family learning network to work more strategically with learners from the community.
21. Care, guidance and support for learners are good, particularly for those on ESOL and learning for life and work courses. Highly effective pre-enrolment interviews and initial assessments place ESOL learners at the right level. Learners' guidance on progression is good. Learning for life and work learners receive good initial and ongoing advice throughout the course from teachers, trained learning support workers and external specialists. The information for initial learner enquiries has much improved through the use of the college information, advice and guidance (IAG) database at centres and partner's venues. Additional learning support is well managed. Staff liaise well to ensure learners have access to appropriate staffing support and adaptive technology. A crèche is provided for all family learning courses.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 2

22. The strategic direction of the college is good. The new organisation is becoming more closely aligned to other council departments. Its board has good representation from elected members, community associations, local business and other interested parties, and actively supports the new principal, providing appropriate leadership, direction and challenge. The board has signed off a new three-year strategic plan ready for implementation. The plan sets detailed, ambitious and challenging targets to be achieved by 2013. Plans place more emphasis on the use of data to support the setting and monitoring

of improvement targets rather than prove contract compliance. The current board follows on from a shadow board formed 18 months prior to the enforced merger and which successfully monitored the move toward the new organisation. The new strategy recognises that the current curriculum offer is too traditional and that urgent work is required to provide pathways within the curriculum to engage learners and lead them on to other programmes allowing those with previously low aspirations to meet their full potential.

23. The management of change is good. Progress toward a new management structure has progressed rapidly. Staff are kept well informed and are consulted about each change. Senior managers from the predecessor organisations have been sensitively appointed to key interim posts. They have responsibilities and detailed work plans designed to complete the new structure quickly and efficiently. At operational management level, leaders and managers from the predecessor organisations are working closely together to share good practice and move toward unified curriculum management for the new college.
24. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Safeguarding and health and safety policies are up to date and comprehensive. All staff are subjected to enhanced CRB checks, which are renewed every three years. Central records are kept by the council and a well-designed colour-coded spreadsheet indicates when initial application or renewal needs to be applied for each member of staff and shows which are first-time applications, which are due to reach the renewal application date and which are required due to change of employer. In the event that a tutor has yet to receive clearance, arrangements are made for another member of staff to be present in the class. Safeguarding officers are based where there are the highest concentrations of vulnerable adults. Informative posters are widespread. Staff undergo appropriate safeguarding training. Reporting and referral procedures are clear. Key staff have booked training on the provider's vetting and barring scheme responsibilities. The provider requires the community associations to have their own arrangements and to certify 100% compliance.
25. Equality and diversity is satisfactory overall; however there is insufficient promotion in the curriculum. The college is subject to the council's equality schemes. Its own policies are up-to-date, comprehensive and demonstrate the organisation's commitment to equality and diversity. The college appropriately considers the impact on equality and diversity of any changes to its other policies and procedures. All staff undergo mandatory training on equality and diversity and treat learners fairly. Complaints over apparent discrimination or bullying are dealt with thoroughly and followed through to an acceptable conclusion. Records of such complaints and how they are dealt with are kept centrally by the council. The provision from both predecessor organisations has been successfully targeted at the areas of highest deprivation and concentration of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Throughout the college merger, retention and enrolment numbers for minority

groups have been sustained. The success rates for adult male and female learners are very similar. The majority of learners from minority ethnic groups perform as well if not better than their peers. The college is fully aware of the need to improve the gaps in performance for a small number of learners on some programmes. It has also identified the need to improve the numbers of male learners which is low. However, with few exceptions, there is little active promotion of equality and diversity in the classroom and it is insufficiently embedded in the curriculum.

26. The provider consults users satisfactorily to improve the existing provision, although employers have not been sufficiently engaged in the planning and design of programmes in the employer-responsive provision. It has relied on the partner community associations to keep it informed of their communities' needs. The college is now becoming more closely aligned to other council departments and has plans to consult more widely on the nature of the provision in order to provide a curriculum offer which will align more closely with the regeneration agenda in the area and support individuals and organisations overcome their low aspirations.
27. Self-assessment was well established in both predecessor organisations. In preparation for the formation of the new college they produced joint quality improvement plans, which resulted in a number of improvements since they were both previously inspected. Areas for improvement identified through the monitoring of performance data, from observations, or input from staff or users have been included. The impact of measures to overcome them is appropriately evaluated and either they are then continued or adapted as required. Quality improvement arrangements do not include sufficient observations of key aspects of learner education and training. Observation of teaching and learning sessions is well established; however observations to monitor other aspects such as enrolment, initial assessment, induction or review are insufficiently developed and do not serve to drive further improvement.
28. Existing financial arrangements have been efficient. Financial managers from the predecessor colleges have been collaborating effectively for some time prior to the formation of the new college, which has helped a smooth transition. A number of proposed changes to working arrangements should provide increased effectiveness although it is too early to judge their impact. The college is able to take advantage of some economies of scale in its purchasing policies by being part of the council's corporate structure. The college makes efficient use of its real estate by using classrooms for meetings, conferences and staff training at times of lower demand for teaching and learning.

## Learning for qualifications in employment

*Other learning for qualifications in employment provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: Health, public service and social care, Business administration and law*

### Education and training

Grade 3

#### Context

29. Currently there are 61 learners working toward Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools (STLS) NVQs at Walsall Adult and Community College. Twenty five learners are enrolled on the level 2 STLS NVQ and a further 36 are enrolled on level 3. Fifty nine learners are female and two male. Thirty five learners are following work-based programmes and 26 are attending more traditional classes at the various college centres.

#### Key findings

- Learners enjoy their training and the opportunity to develop very good work-related skills. Many learners develop significantly increased confidence as a result of the training and working towards a recognised qualification. Learners improve their employability skills. Some 35% of learners who start as volunteer classroom assistants gain employment during training. The standard of work in most portfolios is good.
- Teaching, training and learning are good. Off-the-job training is well planned and learners enjoy effective individual coaching in the workplace. Most training includes a variety of interesting practical activities designed to promote discussion on relevant topics. Training and assessment are delivered by enthusiastic, knowledgeable staff who draw extensively on their personal experiences to bring to life key learning points.
- The quality of target setting and individual learning plans (ILPs) is inconsistent. Key assessment documentation contains errors and omissions and target setting is sometimes vague or insufficiently time bound. Currently there is an over-reliance upon informal and verbal communication to monitor learner progress and documentation for reviews is inadequate.
- Internal verification is generally satisfactory. However, some aspects are insufficiently robust and inconsistently applied. The monitoring of internal verification is inadequate.
- Training satisfactorily meets the needs of most learners and employers. The college provides training for classroom assistants during the day, at times

suitable for those with childcare requirements, and also in the evening. Alternatively, tutors deliver training at the learner's workplace during working hours. Resources to support learning are good. They include traditional text books, good quality handouts and online materials.

- Arrangements to effectively involve employers in the planning and design of learning are inadequate. Employers are not fully or formally involved in the review process; opportunities are missed to maximise the full potential of the workplace in the development and assessment process. The college recognises this and plans are already in place for improvements.
- Leadership and management of the curriculum are now mostly satisfactory. The self assessment report is mostly accurate and appropriate action plans are now in place to improve some aspects of provision, notably the further improvements needed to fully document progress reviews. Communication within teams is good and across the various sites it is now satisfactory.

### What does Walsall Adult and Community College need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop and monitor assessment planning and recording systems to avoid over reliance upon informal and verbal communication to plan, monitor and review learner progress. The documentation to effectively record target setting, including ILPs, should ensure that there is involvement of the employer.
- Extend the scope and consistency of internal verification to include all stages of the assessment cycle. Develop, monitor and evaluate comprehensive verification planning schedules as a tool to improve risk management.
- Improve all employer engagement initiatives to include the employer at all stages of the learners' experience with the college and most importantly at reviews. Implement the proposed QIP actions to improve employer engagement.

### Learning for qualifications

*Other learning for qualifications provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: other provision under subject areas 2, 6, 12, 13 and 14*

English for speakers of other languages

Grade 2

### Context

30. There are 600 adult learners on 67 courses at centres across the borough. Learning takes place at the main base and at 15 community venues. Courses

are offered from pre-entry level through to level 2. There are two full-time and one part-time team leader managing 24 session-based tutors.

## Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners are successful in achieving their learning goals. Nearly all learners who enrol on courses remain to complete their course and are successful in the external examination.
- Learners thoroughly enjoy their learning and are enthusiastic participants in a wide range of active learning activities. Learners, many of whom are new to formal learning, gain confidence to employ their developing language skills in the community and for some this means dispensing with the services of an interpreter.
- Learners feel safe both at the main education site and at the strategically placed outreach locations where learners are part of the local community. Learners report feeling valued and respected by staff.
- ILPs are satisfactory. They contain specific curriculum goals but not all contain specific and relevant personal targets. At reviews, learners are not routinely encouraged to reflect on how their newly acquired skills are making a difference in their daily lives.
- Teaching and learning are good. Planning for sessions is comprehensive and detailed with clear learning outcomes. The individual needs of learners are recognised although planned activities are not always designed to allow for differential response.
- The development of speaking and listening skills for many learners is satisfactory. However, insufficient emphasis is given to improving phonological skills.
- The provider has developed effective relationships with statutory groups and community organisations in order to make provision for some hard to reach groups. Accredited courses are offered at a wide range of easily accessible outreach centres across the borough. Courses are available from pre-entry through to level 2. However, the level of accommodation at outreach centres varies from very good to poor.
- Learners are well supported. Interviews prior to joining the course and initial assessment means learners are placed on courses at the right level. Learners



receive good guidance on onward progression and a high percentage stay on to take courses at a higher level.

- Leadership and management are good. However, the newly formed curriculum area does not yet have a unified management structure with a coherent overview of quality and strategic issues.
- Staff development is good. Staff training has a high priority and all staff have taken part in safeguarding and, equality and diversity training. Tutors, including those at outreach centres, have received training in the use of diagnostic assessment.
- Equality and diversity are good. The curriculum is well used to promote and clarify equality and diversity issues. Learners are clearly aware of the range of diversity issues as they affect their experience in the college as well as in the community.
- The self-assessment report contains judgements on strengths and areas for improvement that are broadly in line with the inspection findings. The Quality Improvement Plan contains clear actions to bring about identified improvements. The provider employs a range of effective strategies for gaining the views of learners and responding to them.

What does Walsall Adult and Community College need to do to improve further?

- Complete the move towards a harmonised and clear management for the curriculum area.
- Review the content of schemes of work and lesson plans to ensure that the phonological aspects of speaking and listening are fully covered.
- Review the ILP process so that specific and relevant personal targets are included and progress towards those targets are reviewed regularly.
- Review the suitability of some outreach centres to ensure, where possible, that accommodation and resources adequately support the learning programme and needs of learners.

## Learning for life and work

## Grade 2

## Context

31. At the time of inspection, 299 learners were on learning for living and work programmes. Learners have a diverse range of learning, physical and mental health disabilities. The majority are adults, and are on college-based courses in a wide range of occupational areas. Fifteen learners are on community-based courses, including a supported work programme in the local authority sheltered warehouse at Willenhall, run by Links to Work.

## Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates for learners on college-based provision are high and improving, rising to 94% in 2008/09. Success rates for community based provision are lower, rising to 75% in 2008/09. Achievement of qualifications is improving, with 36% of learners achieving at least one unit of an externally accredited qualification in 2008/09, compared to 18% in the previous year. Learners enjoy learning and achieving qualifications.
- Learners make satisfactory progress between levels within the college, often over several years. The college recognises external progression is low and is an area for improvement. In 2008/09, only nine learners progressed to external training, education or employment, although two more learners have now become volunteers in a community project.
- Learners develop good social, personal and independent living skills. They greatly improve social interaction and team working, and develop healthy and independent lifestyles through cooking, sewing and horticulture. Learners on the supported work programme gain good employability skills. Learners contribute particularly well to community activities such as concerts, fund raising, and creating community gardens, which develop their confidence and self esteem.
- Learners feel safe when they are in college. They all receive an induction, which includes health and safety rules and anti-bullying policies. Teachers create a positive and safe learning environment in lessons, and carry out frequent and rigorous risk assessments. Satisfactory attention is paid to health and safety in lessons.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and sequenced. Teachers make good links with previous learning, and reinforce knowledge well with innovative games and practical activities. They make very effective use of visual aids and role play, and manage challenging behaviour well. Learning in most lessons is very personalised and, in cookery and sewing, learners apply numeracy skills well.

- Resources are overall satisfactory. Staff are well qualified and experienced. Learning environments are good on the main site, where the majority of learners attend, with well equipped specialist kitchens and computer suites, but environments are poor at community venues. Not all rooms have access to ILT. In a few lessons teachers do not adapt textual resources sufficiently to suit learners' reading levels.
- Initial and diagnostic assessments are satisfactory, and improving in consistency and quality. Most teachers use results effectively to plan learning. Teachers carefully monitor the progress of learners through frequent and regular reviews. However, they do not always give effective feedback to learners on how to improve, and do not always correct grammar and spelling. Teachers do not reflect sufficiently on their own teaching or regularly exchange good practice with colleagues.
- The range of subjects is wide and learners can progress from pre-entry to intermediate level. However, there are insufficient information technology courses at pre-entry level. Learners participate in an exceptionally wide range of enrichment activities including: fundraising, volunteering, social enterprise, and a variety of lunchtime clubs. However, the college does not offer sufficient opportunities for learners to join in sporting activities.
- The college has long-established and productive partnerships with a wide range of voluntary and statutory community partners. Some of these provide outside speakers on such topics as healthy living. However, the college has insufficient links with employers to improve work experience and job opportunities.
- Learners receive good initial and ongoing advice and guidance throughout their programme from a dedicated adviser. Teachers and trained learning support workers give good individual support in lessons. Staff liaise well with relevant support agencies and carers. Learners have good access to subsidised transport. However, not all staff makes sufficient use of the wide range of adaptive equipment available to learners.
- Curriculum management is good. The merger of the two colleges has been introduced sensitively, and learners have felt little impact. Managers consult well with staff before implementing change. Staff development is appropriate and linked to individual and curriculum needs. Internal verification is effective.
- Social inclusion is good, although men are still under-represented. Teachers do not always promote equality and diversity sufficiently in curriculum planning to widen learners' understanding. However, learners and staff treat each other with dignity and respect and are both protected from bullying and harassment. Safeguarding arrangements are good, and learners adopt safe working practices.
- Many improvements have been made to the provision since the last inspection. Learners' outcomes, the standard of teaching and the personal

tutor system have all improved. Feedback systems for learners are now effective. However, some improvements in processes and documentation are fairly recent, and have yet to be harmonised across all provision.

What does Walsall Adult and Community College need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the links with employers to widen work experience and job opportunities for learners.
- Share the good practice in teaching across the provision through peer observations and team teaching. Encourage teachers to reflect on their own teaching practice and to make further improvements themselves.
- Ensure that teachers consistently provide effective feedback to learners on how to improve, including the correction of grammar and spelling to raise the standard and accuracy of students' work
- Further improve the promotion of equality and diversity in curriculum planning to strengthen learners' understanding of the wider aspects.
- Increase the provision of pre-entry level information technology courses.

## Learning for social and personal development

*Other learning for social and personal development provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: Family Learning*

Community Learning

Grade 3

### Context

32. There are 1,753 learners in non-accredited learning, including community learning. Learners take part in a wide range of courses in over fifty venues including schools, libraries, community centres and church halls. In eight neighbourhoods there are community associations that deliver the programme as sub-contractors. In the remaining neighbourhoods the programme is directly delivered by the college.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. The majority of learners achieve their learning goals and many produce very good work. For instance, learners in the digital photography class have won prizes for their photographs and sugarcraft learners have decorated cakes for important family events.

Learners increase their confidence and raise their aspirations through mastering new skills. They greatly enjoy their learning and attend well.

- Learners' health and well-being are enhanced by opportunities to engage in a range of physical activity classes. Learners in belly dancing improve their breathing, flexibility, strength and stamina.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors are enthusiastic and caring. Learners often benefit from helpful step-by-step instruction. Some tutors make particularly good use of homework assignments which stretch learners and increase their motivation. Tutors cope well with groups where learners are at different levels. Most sessions are heavily tutor-centred and opportunities for learners to take the lead are often overlooked. In some sessions tutors talk too much and learners remain too passive. Learners are rarely encouraged to reflect on the learning process and see the transferability of their learning skills. Tutors are focused on teaching their subject and do not give enough attention to the wider personal development of the learners.
- Learners have good access to a wide range of classes that enable them to develop new hobbies and interests. The college effectively uses its partnerships to publicise classes and engage new learners. Taster sessions are provided successfully in conjunction with partners and provision is coordinated to try to ensure that progression opportunities are available in a timely way.
- The college actively engages in a wide range of productive partnerships including schools, libraries, voluntary organisations, community and residents associations, housing and the police. A particular strength is the close partnership working between the college and the eight community associations with which it sub-contracts.
- The current model does not sufficiently support the empowerment of learners. Tutors lack awareness of the wider purpose of community learning and so cannot communicate this to learners. Learners tend to stay with the familiar and remain largely within gender and age stereotypes.
- The provision is not yet sufficiently linked to the wider regeneration agenda. Processes for exploring community needs are limited at present, often with a reliance on asking current learners what else they would like or responding to requests from other agencies.
- There is a strong strategic vision and commitment to setting a new agenda for community learning. In particular the vision is to introduce a curriculum with

clear pathways between the various subject areas and with progression routes both within the provider's own programmes and to other providers in the area. In addition the envisaged programme would be more learner centred and contribute to the wider regeneration agenda in Walsall.

- The classes effectively promote social and community cohesion. They are well managed to ensure new learners feel welcome. Tutors include activities that enable learners to get to know each other and break down barriers. Learners get involved in numerous community events, especially those organised by the community associations which host many of the classes.

What does Walsall Adult and Community College need to do to improve further?

- Develop and implement a cohesive community learning plan that supports individual learner development and the wider regeneration agenda.
- Further develop personalised, continuing-professional development for tutors to enable them to recognise the importance of learners' wider development within community learning programmes and to amend their teaching styles accordingly.

## Information about the inspection

33. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the college's interim director of quality as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment reports and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, Framework for Excellence indicators, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
34. Inspectors used group, individual interviews and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of the college. They also visited learning sessions, assessments or progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

## Walsall Adult and Community College

Learning types: 14-16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships.

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive	social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners	4,210	2,100	310	1,800
Full-time learners				
Part-time learners				
Overall effectiveness	2	2	3	2
Capacity to improve	2			
A. Outcomes for learners	2	2	3	2
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2			
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2			
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	2			
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2			
A3. Do learners feel safe?	3			
A4. Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	3			
A5. How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	3			
B. Quality of provision	3	2	3	3
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3			
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3			
B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2			
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2			
C. Leadership and management	2	2	3	3
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2			
C2. How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	2			
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2			
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3			
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3			
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3			
C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3			

\*where applicable to the type of provision



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