

Kent Community Learning and Skills

Inspection report

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Type of provider: Local authority

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Information about the provider

1. Since April 2009, when Kent Adult Education Service and Key Training Services (Key) merged, Kent Community Learning and Skills (KCLS) has delivered the adult and community learning, work-based learning and employability provision for Kent County Council (KCC). At the time of inspection, KCLS has 26,226 learners. This includes 24,686 adult and community learners across 15 subject areas and family learning, 243 Entry to Employment (E2E) and 1,297 Train to Gain learners and apprentices. KCLS has 13 adult education centres, eleven skills plus centres, five Key training centres and over 175 outreach and community venues. KCLS has over 700 tutors. It is managed by a central strategic and administrative team, supported by local curriculum, operational and functional managers. The central strategic and administrative team are based in Sittingbourne. KCLS holds a contract with Kent Skills Funding Agency (SFA).
2. Kent County Council is the largest non-metropolitan authority in England with a population of 1,406,600 in November 2009, that has been growing over the last ten years. Kent has an older age profile than the national average, with 20% of the population being aged over 60. A higher proportion of people are White British, White Irish and White Other than England and the South East, at 94% in 2007. Unemployment in March 2010 is 3.7% in Kent, which is higher than the South East and lower than for Great Britain.
3. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the provider:
 - Walk Tall (preparation for work)
 - SET Training (preparation for work)
 - IPS (apprenticeships).

| Type of provision | Number of learners in 2008/09 |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Young learner provision: 14 to 16 | 194 learners |
| Further education (16 to 18) | 365 part-time learners |
| Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment | 816 full-time learners |
| Adult learner provision: Learning for qualifications | 7,070 part-time learners |
| Learning for social and personal development | 18,537 part-time learners |
| Employer provision: Train to Gain | 1,164 learners |
| Apprenticeships | 479 apprentices |

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 | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 2 |
| Safeguarding | 2 |
| Equality and diversity | 3 |
| Learning for qualifications in employment | |
| | Grade |
| Health, public services and care | 2 |
| Business, administration and law | 3 |
| Learning for qualifications | |
| | Grade |
| Foundations for learning and life | 2 |
| Preparation for work | 3 |
| Learning for social and personal development | |
| | Grade |
| Arts, media and publishing | 2 |
| Classical and modern foreign languages | 2 |

Overall effectiveness

4. Learners achieve qualifications well. They make good progress and enjoy their learning. Their work is of a high standard. Learners develop good skills and knowledge. They increase their confidence and become more independent. Apprentices, Train to Gain and E2E learners develop a wide range of useful skills relevant for work. Learners feel safe in the welcoming learning centres that they attend.
5. There is good quality teaching, coaching and learning. Tutors take good account of learners' individual needs when planning lessons. Learners are challenged well through well designed and stimulating activities. Apprentices and Train to Gain learners' learning is linked well to their work environment. Some learners are not sufficiently inspired by their tutors to reach their full potential in lessons. KCLS offers a wide range of courses delivered in community venues close to where learners live. Employers', apprentices' and Train to Gain learners' needs are very well met through the flexible approach taken by tutors and assessors. KCLS has an extensive range of partners that they work with to ensure local community needs are met and that the course offer is highly relevant. Some subjects do not have sufficient courses at a higher level for learners to progress onto and learners are not sufficiently guided about how to move forward. Learners receive effective help and support from their tutors and assessors
6. Kent Community Learning and Skills' courses are well managed. Managers successfully improve achievement and the quality of teaching. They have a good understanding of what needs to be improved, although they do not always ask learners to verify their conclusions. However, managers and tutors listen to what learners have to say about specific courses and use this to make appropriate changes. Most tutors satisfactorily promote equality and diversity in lessons, and dance and classical and modern foreign languages tutors incorporate this very well.

Main findings

- Success rates are high, particularly for learners on personal and social development courses and by learners aged over 19 on courses leading to a qualification. Apprentices and Train to Gain learners have satisfactory success rates. Learners make good progress and achieve their qualifications within their agreed target dates. E2E learners have satisfactory progression into employment.
- Learners develop good skills, often to a professional standard. They produce work of a high standard. Apprentices and Train to Gain learners develop a wide range of job-specific skills and additional qualifications which they use well at work. E2E learners greatly improve their knowledge and employability skills through well-organised work placements.

- Learners enjoy their learning and increase their social well-being and self esteem. They are well motivated and develop confidence and independence in their learning. Tutors promote success well and learners have a strong sense of achievement. Learners who are involved in community activities benefit from their positive interactions with the public and external organisations.
- There is good quality teaching, coaching and learning. Tutors give good consideration to the wide range of abilities in the class. Learning sessions are well planned. In the better lessons, learners' knowledge is extended and challenged through well-designed learning activities. However, KCLS has insufficient outstanding lessons and in the less effective lessons learners are insufficiently inspired.
- Kent Community Learning and Skills has a broad range of provision that meets learners' and employers' needs and interests well. The needs of socially deprived learners are particularly well met. Managers and staff work very effectively with employers to offer a flexible and responsive provision. However, KCLS does not have sufficient progression routes on some personal and social development courses and apprenticeships.
- Partnership working is particularly effective in enriching and developing the provision. KCLS uses its extensive links with a network of external agencies to engage with learners across the county. Managers plan the provision well with their partners and offer courses in a wide range of convenient and comfortable learning venues.
- Health, public services and care and E2E learners receive good advice, guidance and support. In other subject areas, this is satisfactory. Tutors provide good pastoral support. They widely promote the range of available support. Personal and social development learners and apprentices do not receive sufficient appropriate advice and guidance, particularly about the next stages of their learning.
- Kent Community Learning and Skills' good strategic planning strongly meets the identified priorities and needs of adult learners in Kent. Leaders astutely merged the two organisations together providing a broader range of provision and shared expertise. Senior managers set challenging strategic targets, which are successfully met.
- Managers are empowered to improve the quality of the provision and standards of learning. Curriculum management is good in most of the subject areas inspected. Managers set tutors clear developmental targets leading to improvement. Self-assessment is thorough and inclusive of staff, but does not sufficiently include learners, partners and employers in scrutinizing the judgements.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good and well managed. Expertise about safeguarding is shared and used well. Staff are well trained and promote the subject well. They carry out thorough risk assessments. Learners feel safe.
- Kent Community Learning and Skills has greatly improved the promotion of equality and diversity. Staff have a better understanding and knowledge of diversity issues. KCLS provides good learning opportunities and initiatives to

engage with under-represented learner groups. In some curriculum areas, tutors promote equality and diversity well in their lessons and activities. In other curriculum areas, this is satisfactory.

- Staff have good development which they use well to enrich the learners' experience. Tutors are inspired by their staff development activities. Managers very effectively link their observations of lessons to tutor development and improving standards.

What does Kent Community Learning and Skills need to do to improve further?

- Drive up the proportion of lessons that are outstanding, through better identifying and sharing good practice.
- Develop appropriate progression routes and promote these effectively to learners.
- Involve a wider range of stakeholders in the self-assessment process to ensure the judgements reflect their views.
- Integrate more widely equality and diversity within the curriculum, ensuring its relevance to the subject being taught and raising learner awareness.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the extremely skilled and knowledgeable tutors who make learning very enjoyable
- the helpful and friendly staff in all the learning centres
- the positive effect of learning on confidence and self esteem
- the improvement in health and well-being, particularly for older learners
- the broad range of courses available
- the good resources that are available to support learning
- the high level of personal support provided by tutors and assessors to encourage learners
- the acquisition of relevant work skills and qualifications
- the accessibility of courses for learners with a disability.

What learners would like to see improved:

- a reduction in the volume of assessment paperwork that has to be completed
- a reduction in the cost of courses, particularly for older learners
- greater certainty about the continuity of their learning
- more help with progression to the next stage of learning.

Summary of the views of employers/partners as confirmed by inspectors

What employers/partners like:

- the flexible approach taken by assessors when visiting learners at work
- the good quality of training, which is relevant to their business needs
- the high level of support from tutors and assessors, which has enabled learners to achieve their qualification
- the way that KCLS managers listen to their views and make improvements
- the improvements that they have noticed in their staff effectiveness following training
- the benefits and relevance of learning to those in society who are most deprived.

What employers/partners would like to see improved:

- better communication with tutors and assessors who have the ongoing contact with learners
- more effective management of learners while they are on work placements.

Main inspection findings

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

7. Kent Community Learning and Skills has good capacity to improve. The organisation has successfully resolved almost all the key challenges from the previous inspection. Success rates across the provision are generally improving and greater numbers of learners who start a course to gain a qualification are achieving. Managers have improved the quality of the provision. This is particularly significant in subject areas judged inadequate at the previous inspection. KCLS has successfully met its priorities in the last strategic plan, which resulted in more broad and varied courses, improved resources and a stronger position in the heart of communities. The self-assessment process is inclusive and is used effectively as a starting point to implement strategies for quality improvement. KCLS has a well established and implemented scheme for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning that has improved the lower teaching grades. Managers are now targeting raising satisfactory teaching. The team for implementing quality improvement has a good ethos and directs resources pragmatically to tackle key issues identified themselves or during self-assessment. Staff generally are empowered and committed to improving quality for learners.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

8. Success rates for learners on personal and social development courses are consistently high. In particular, they are very high for arts, media and publishing and family learning learners at over 90% in 2008/09. KCLS has maintained, or increased, the high success rates despite introducing a more thorough system for setting learners' targets and measuring achievements in 2008/09.
9. Success rates for learners aged over 19 on courses leading to a qualification significantly improved between 2006 and 2009, and in 2008/09 were high and above national rates. On very short courses of less than five weeks, success rates are very high at 98%. The small numbers of learners aged 16 to 18 on courses leading to qualifications have low success rates that are significantly below national rates. KCLS is aware of some of the issues why this age group does not succeed as well and is implementing action to rectify this situation.
10. Health, public services and care apprentices have high success rates that are above national rates. On all other programmes, overall and timely success rates have steadily improved and in 2008/09 were satisfactory and in line with national rates. Advanced apprenticeship overall and timely success rates are low and remain well below national rates. There are early indications in 2009/10 that these rates are much improved and satisfactory or better.
11. Train to Gain learners' timely success rates are consistently high and well above national rates, particularly at level 2. Their overall success rates are satisfactory, being just above national rates at level 2 and slightly below at level

3. However, overall and timely success rates for the small number of Train to Gain Skills for Life learners are low.
12. Entry to Employment progression rates are satisfactory at 54% in 2009/10. Progression and qualification achievement rates are better by women than men and lower by learners who have declared they have a disability.
 13. Learners develop good skills, often to a professional standard. They produce work of a high standard. Apprentices and Train to Gain learners develop a wide range of job-specific skills and additional qualifications which they use well at work. E2E learners greatly improve their knowledge and employability skills through well-organised work placements.
 14. Learners feel safe. They learn in welcoming environments close to where they live. Learners attending skills plus centres value the opportunity to learn in a small learning centre dedicated to their specific learning and support needs. Tutors use appropriate risk assessments to ensure learners' safety. Learners use safe working practices during practical sessions, particularly when using hazardous equipment and machinery.
 15. Learners enjoy their learning and increase their social well-being and self esteem. Learners develop independence and confidence through their learning, which some use to evaluate their progress critically. Tutors promote success well and learners have a strong sense of achievement. E2E learners are involved in a wide range of community activities and benefit from their positive interactions with the public and external organisations.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

16. Teaching, training and coaching are good. Tutors plan lessons well using a range of appropriate learner-centred activities. Tutors give good consideration to the wide range of abilities, needs and interests of those participating. In the better classes, they carefully design learning activities to challenge and extend learners' abilities and capabilities. Learning is at a good pace and well structured. Tutors use very effective questioning techniques developing learners' skills such as problem solving. They make good use of their experience and talents to enthuse learners. Work-based learners receive very effective, individualised coaching from experienced and accessible trainers and assessors. In the less effective lessons, learners are insufficiently inspired or stimulated. KCLS has made a significant investment in technology and virtual learning environments, but these are not yet sufficiently used by all tutors and learners.
17. Kent Community Learning and Skills has a thorough and well established system for observing teaching and learning that is improving the quality of lessons. Managers give accurate judgements and grades that are robustly moderated. Tutors receive comprehensive feedback with a clear focus on improvement.

18. Assessment and feedback are satisfactory. Health, social care and public services, E2E and classical and modern foreign languages learners receive very useful feedback that they use well to improve their skills and knowledge. Some tutors do not record sufficient detail about what the learner has to do to improve their skills.
19. Learners' additional learning and support needs are effectively identified through initial assessment. In the better classes, tutors use the results of initial assessment to agree clear and achievable targets with learners. However, too many learners have vague or whole group targets. Tutors and learners do not sufficiently monitor their progress towards achieving goals and targets.
20. The provision meets the needs of learners and employers well. KCLS offers an extensive range of provision at different levels, that is delivered across a large and diverse geographical area. The needs of socially deprived learners are particularly effectively met, impacting significantly on their life chances. Tutors and assessors have a good understanding of employers' needs for flexibility and responsiveness, especially in health, public services and care. E2E learners attend work placements across an extensive range of vocational areas that improve their employability skills and increase their understanding of work opportunities. Learners are involved in a suitable range of enrichment activities.
21. Managers of many personal and social development courses have not planned sufficient progression routes. On these courses, learners typically stay in the same group for many years. Not all business, administration and law learners are on courses at the correct level based on their previous qualifications and career potential.
22. Kent Community Learning and Skills works particularly well with a wide network of agencies to engage learners who are hard to reach. Managers use partnerships very positively to facilitate and enrich curriculum development. They plan the provision well with their partners to ensure that duplication is avoided. KCLS has made productive use of their partnerships to provide access to a wide range of convenient learning venues in which learners feel comfortable. They maximise the funding available through flexible working with partners. Family learning managers collaborate well with staff at children's centres, promoting inclusion through crèche provision. Peer review groups have been established to facilitate quality improvement amongst partners. E2E managers use a broad range of external links very effectively to develop learners' work-related skills. However, they do not sufficiently involve employers in reviewing learners' progress or the effectiveness of the programme.
23. Learners receive satisfactory care, guidance and support. Staff widely promote the range of support that is available to learners. The newly-appointed 'Learner Journey Officers' encourage and facilitate increased learner confidence to self declare their support needs. Senior managers have worked productively with KCC to ensure continuity in financial support to the most vulnerable learners. Most courses operate an open enrolment process and the proportion of new learners enrolling is generally satisfactory, with some low rates in specific

subject areas. Arts, media and publishing learners receive insufficient guidance about course levels, progression to higher level courses or what to do when courses are full.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

24. Kent Community Learning and Skills' strategic planning accurately matches the learning and skills needs of learners in the county. Senior managers set challenging strategic targets for the adult learning service. Their astute merger between the two strategic partners of Kent Adult Education Service and Key Training Services provides an improved integration of expertise and a broader range of provision. Managers from both former organisations are working more closely together. They are motivated to explore and improve the ways that the different provision is delivered.
25. Leaders continue to successfully promote the ambitions and priorities of the organisation. Senior managers motivate and inspire a surety and confidence in their staff. Managers are empowered to raise the standards of learning. Teams with key responsibilities have valuable expertise and knowledge in their roles which they contribute with collaborative enthusiasm. However, some managers are further forward in implementing KCLS's aspirations than others.
26. The elected council member responsible for overseeing adult learning has an active involvement and strong commitment to it. He has clear expectations that KCLS will provide the right variety of quality provision for the learning needs of Kent. He has a good knowledge of the provision and scrutinizes its performance well.
27. Kent Community Learning and Skills has good safeguarding arrangements. Senior managers have made significant investment in ensuring the safety of learners. All staff and volunteers are suitably checked with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). Staff receive a good range of safeguarding training according to their level of responsibility. Staff carry an innovative safeguarding card advising them of the procedures they need to follow and out-of-hours contacts. Those with lead responsibility for safeguarding have successfully raised the profile of the subject within KCLS. Records of staff training and CRB checks are comprehensive and routinely monitored. Staff suitably risk assess young people, vulnerable adults, employers' premises and learning venues. Where issues arise, staff adequately record them and, where appropriate, refer cases to external agencies. Expertise about safeguarding is used and shared well with external providers and organisations.
28. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Partnerships have been used well in some of the provision to target more hard-to-reach communities. Managers have introduced a great deal of flexible ways to learn such as 'pay as you go' where you pay and attend a class on a particular day. KCLS provides good learning opportunities for those less likely to demand learning. Its website is easy and attractive to use. Staff use good learning initiatives to engage with under-represented learner groups. Leaders have successfully raised some of the

awareness of tutors through promoting the benefits of integrating equality and diversity into learning. However, where good equality and diversity practice occurs in lessons, it is insufficiently shared across the organisation. Those with responsibility for promoting equality and diversity demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of issues. Staff in marketing roles have completed useful and detailed analysis of the demography of potential learners. Managers have improved and are more skilled in using information to measure the participation and performance of different groups of learners. They implement adequate actions to resolve achievement gaps. Managers are aware that their current staffing profile does not match the general population and see this as an area for improvement.

29. Kent Community Learning and Skills has developed a range of ways of engaging with learners and employers, including mystery shoppers and market research. Learners and employers mostly respond positively about KCLS in questionnaires and evaluations. Managers monitor attendance and follow up withdrawals to find out why learners left or are not attending. KCLS has some good strategic plans to engage learners more formally and coordinate learner involvement. Stakeholders, particularly learners and employers, are insufficiently involved in evaluating KCLS's view of itself.
30. Managers have improved the self-assessment process, which continues to be used successfully as a quality improvement tool. They use data effectively to evaluate the provision. Some curriculum managers are better and more skilled at identifying clear areas for improvement. They summarise these well in useful diagrams. However, many managers have insufficient recollection of the key strengths and areas for improvement for the organisation. The self-assessment report often contains too much description.
31. Kent Community Learning and Skills continues to maintain good adult learning services for learners despite continued financial pressures. Leaders have made good investments in virtual learning technology, tutor training and new quality initiatives. Staff development is good. Staff have access to a good range of training to improve their skills, meet KCLS's priorities and to improve the learning experience for learners. KCLS's improved system for the observation of teaching and learning has a clear and logical focus on improving those tutors who are graded satisfactory or below and those that are new to the service. New accommodation, which is thoughtfully located, has provided the basis for reaching new communities and to develop new partnerships and provision that is more sustainable. Resources are generally good for learners. Some tutors have improved their use of interactive learning technology in teaching sessions, but it is still insufficiently used across the provision.

Learning for qualifications in employment

Other learning for qualifications in employment provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: retailing and wholesaling, hairdressing and beauty therapy, hospitality and catering, education and training.

Health, public services and care

Grade 2

Context

32. Kent Community Learning and Skills has 171 learners taking qualifications in health and social care and children's care, learning and development (CCLD). All learners are employed. There are 56 learners on apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. The remaining learners are on Train to Gain programmes, with 59 taking National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) at level 2 and 56 at level 3. Of the learners 5% are men and 11% are from minority ethnic groups.

Key findings

- Children's care, learning and development apprentices have high overall and very high timely success rates. Train to Gain learners have consistently high timely success rates. However, overall success rates for Train to Gain learners and the relatively low number of apprentices in health and social care are satisfactory. The small number of advanced apprentices have very low overall success rates.
- Learners make good progress in developing skills and confidence, some from a low starting point. Learners gain qualifications to enhance their employment opportunities and career advancement. The standard of level 2 learners' professional practice and oral work is good for the level of the course. Their written work is satisfactory.
- There is good teaching, coaching and learning. Tutors and assessors make good links between theory and workplace practice. They use learner-centred activities with measurable outcomes and challenging questioning to enable highly-effective learning. In the minority of less effective lessons, tutors use insufficient questioning strategies and extension activities to explore and develop higher level knowledge and skills.
- Children's care, learning and development learners have good resources to support their learning. Their tutors are well qualified and have good occupational experience, which they use to enhance the learning experience. Health and social care learners have insufficient access to appropriate resources, including technology. Too few health and social care tutors have occupational qualifications that are higher than the level they are delivering.
- Learners generally have good, detailed and measurable targets for their vocation learning. Initial assessment is thorough, but tutors do not sufficiently use the results when planning individual learning.

- The curriculum is well structured to meet the needs and interests of learners and employers. Assessors work very effectively with employers and learners to plan the vocational learning programme and select appropriate optional units for the individual settings. They deliver teaching and coaching very flexibly in the workplace.
- Partnerships are good. Employers are actively engaged in the planning and delivery of learning. Managers work with schools and other external organisations to support entry routes for disadvantaged learners. KCLS uses information on local needs well to identify new qualifications, like play work.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Learners receive enthusiastic and high levels of support from tutors, assessors and their peers. Their assessors have a good awareness of their individual circumstances and provide appropriate help. Learners receive good guidance about how to reference efficiently their work to their qualification. Tutors do not sufficiently promote progression routes or challenge learners' aspirations.
- Curriculum management is good. Management of the CCLD programme is strong with a well-established team. Staff have a clear understanding of the strategic direction and the emphasis on quality improvement. Communications are good through a well-structured programme of meetings in which learner progress is monitored and targets reviewed.
- Staff are fully involved in quality improvement arrangements and value the feedback from the observation process. The internal verification process is robust and supports improvement. However, the sharing of good practice remains under-developed and the causes of the lower success rate on level 3 qualifications have not been fully explored.

What does Kent Community Learning and Skills need to do to improve further?

- Extend the sharing of good practice and review the current requirements for occupational qualifications of staff so they are better able to challenge and extend learners' professional skills and knowledge.
- Increase the access to resources to support the development of health and social care learners' knowledge.
- Publicise examples of progression routes, including successful learner case studies, to strengthen the guidance for learners and raise their aspirations and knowledge of the opportunities available to them.

Business, administration and law

Grade 3

Context

33. Kent Community Learning and Skills has 149 learners taking qualifications in business administration and customer service. A high proportion of these learners are on a temporary contract with KCC for the duration of their apprenticeship. The rest are in permanent employment with companies across the county. There are 115 learners on apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. The remaining learners are on Train to Gain programmes, with 22 learners taking NVQs at level 2 and 12 at level 3. Of the learners 66% are men and 6% are from minority ethnic groups.

Key findings

- Overall and timely success rates are good in customer service and satisfactory in business administration. In recent years the majority of apprentices employed on temporary contracts have gained permanent employment or promotion at the end of their training. However, too few apprentices progress onto the advanced apprenticeship.
- Learners develop good personal and employment-based skills. They improve their confidence and organisational skills, as well as a wide variety of job-specific skills. Many learners develop good information technology skills. They are given added responsibility at work for organising events and projects. Learners make significant improvements in their capability and reliability.
- Tutors and assessors satisfactorily promote safety and well-being with learners. They complete comprehensive risk assessments at employers' premises before learners start their programme. Learners have appropriate induction training on health and safety.
- Learners receive good quality assessment and development. Tutors and assessors provide good, individualised coaching during monthly visits to learners at work. Tutors and assessors use their wealth of experience and expertise towards a wide variety of practical activities that engage and develop learners' skills.
- Learners complete a satisfactory initial assessment that appropriately identifies the very few that need support with literacy, numeracy or additional learning. Tutors and assessors provide appropriate support during coaching and assessment activities. Where necessary, learners receive more specialist support from one of KCLS's functional skills teams.
- Learners have satisfactory and regular reviews of their progress. Most employers are usefully involved in learners' progress reviews. Assessors do not always set sufficiently specific or challenging targets against which progress can be measured. This has been recognised by managers, who are taking appropriate actions to improve the quality of learners' targets.
- Resources are currently satisfactory but at times have affected the rate of learners' progress. Managers have restored continuity in assessment for the

small number of learners affected by staff shortages and changes. Tutors and assessors are starting to use technology and the virtual learning environment, but recognise this is still under-developed.

- Learners are matched as closely as possible to available jobs and qualifications. They gain useful employment experience. However, a significant number of apprentices, who have taken A levels or university qualifications, are on programmes at a less challenging level than they are academically capable of achieving.
- Too few apprentices have the opportunity to take a level 3 qualification. KCLS does not effectively promote to learners or employers the benefits of extending training beyond the apprenticeship. Managers have not developed formal partnership arrangements with other training providers to offer appropriate progression routes.
- Managers, tutors and assessors have good engagement with employers. Assessors maintain regular contact with employers to ensure their needs are fully met. Employers' views are sought and encouraged when planning for assessment and as part of the review process. Many employers provide good support and development for learners.
- Curriculum management is satisfactory. Team members regularly share information and lines of communication are clear. Staff are well qualified both occupationally and in assessment and verification techniques. Staff development is satisfactory and individual staff are encouraged to improve their knowledge and skills.
- Tutors and assessors promote equality and diversity effectively during induction and coaching sessions. Assessors do not sufficiently reinforce equality and diversity during learners' progress reviews. While they are compliant with KCLS's procedures, assessors do not sufficiently extend learners' knowledge and awareness of the subject.
- Managers make good use of quality improvement procedures. They have successfully improved internal verification procedures, assessment planning and initial assessment. Internal verification is good with regular monthly meetings that include standardisation across both teams. Assessors are much more consistent in their practice and have improved the activities they use following support at standardisation meetings.

What does Kent Community Learning and Skills need to do to improve further?

- Identify suitable level 3 programmes or progression routes with partners to ensure learners are on a challenging programme that meets and builds on their academic level, aspirations and potential.
- Continue to improve success rates by setting challenging and specific targets during learners' progress reviews and ensuring the continuity of staffing levels.
- Continue to develop the use of information technology and virtual learning environments to enable learners to better access learning materials.

- Make better use of the information and resources available through KCLS to equip assessors in promoting equality and diversity more effectively with learners.

Learning for qualifications

Other learning for qualifications provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded : health, public services and care, science and mathematics, information and communication technology, hairdressing and beauty therapy, sport, leisure and recreation, arts, media and publishing, languages, literature and culture, education and training, business administration and law and family learning.

Foundations for learning and life

Grade 2

Context

34. Kent Community Learning and Skills has 4,118 learners on literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses. Of these learners, 1,784 are on literacy courses, 1,275 are on numeracy courses and 1,059 are attending ESOL courses. Courses are provided from entry level to level 2 at all the main and skills plus learning centres and a wide range of community venues across the county. The programme is managed by a skills for life and work learning manager, supported by four programme development managers and a team of 70 tutors.

Key findings

- Success rates have improved substantially over the last three years and were above national rates in 2008/09. Success rates are high for ESOL learners at entry level and for numeracy at level 2. Success rates remain low on the small number of literacy and numeracy qualifications at entry level and for ESOL qualifications at levels 1 and 2.
- Learners produce work of a good standard. They are well motivated, enjoy learning, and gain confidence and a sense of achievement. Learners improve their employability prospects through their learning, for example by meeting the entry requirements for working in specific professions or by developing the skills needed to apply for jobs and attend interview.
- Learners feel safe. Learning centres are welcoming, well equipped and friendly. Learners are treated with respect and find staff approachable. Learners receive effective safeguarding, health and safety information at induction, which is reinforced by notices and leaflets in their learning centre. Information for ESOL learners is adjusted to their language level. Learners understand their rights and responsibilities.
- There is good quality teaching and learning. Lessons are well planned and taught. Tutors use imaginative and relevant activities to develop learners' skills and enthusiasm. In the better lessons, all learners are challenged well. Resources are generally good. In a few lessons the pace is steady. Tutors do not always link the skills being taught to their practical context.
- Learners complete thorough initial and diagnostic assessments. In the best lessons, tutors use the results effectively to plan, differentiate learning and set targets. In a few lessons, tutors do not sufficiently use the information from

diagnostic assessments and learners' progress reviews are less detailed or incomplete.

- Partnerships are well developed and productive. Managers and tutors use a wide range of established community links to extend the range of provision and promote access to courses. Their actions have successfully increased recruitment to literacy and numeracy courses over the last three years.
- Learners receive satisfactory support, advice and guidance. Tutors work closely with learners and provide effective informal guidance and support. Learners are appropriately signposted to additional support where required and to progression opportunities.
- Curriculum management is good. Clear strategic direction and strong management of performance has led to improvements in success rates and in the quality of teaching and learning. Managers use data well to identify areas for improvement and implement successful action.
- Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Staff are suitably trained to carry out their responsibilities. Learners are listened to and satisfactory use is made of their feedback in the development of the provision.
- Managers and tutors promote equality and diversity effectively, including within lessons. Tutors' awareness of the needs of minority groups has been raised through the introduction of new initiatives, which are beginning to have an impact on teaching and learning. Managers are starting to evaluate the impact of the provision on different groups.

What does Kent Community Learning and Skills need to do to improve further?

- Closer analysis by managers of the reasons why learners drop out of their learning and the performance of different groups to further improve success rates.
- More specialist guidance and support for tutors who are supporting learners with multiple barriers to learning.
- Further develop the successful initiatives for supporting tutors to improve teaching and learning.

Preparation for work

Grade 3

Context

35. Kent Community Learning and Skills has 266 E2E learners. Fifteen learners are on a programme that is delivered by two subcontractors. Learners attend one of the five key learning centres situated across Kent. They work toward achieving externally-accredited 'Step Up' units that KCLS introduced in 2009. Learners additionally take level 1 qualifications in health and safety at work and key skills in application of number and communication. After the first six weeks of their programme, learners progress onto work experience, which is an integral part of their course.

Key findings

- Learners' progression rates into employment, further education or training are satisfactory. Although over the past three years there has been a slightly declining trend, this has improved in the first 10 months of 2009/10. Learners make satisfactory progress towards achieving externally-accredited qualifications and in improving their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Learners make good improvements in developing their confidence, motivation and personal skills which help to improve their employment prospects. They increase their knowledge of work significantly through particularly well organised work experience placements.
- Learners feel safe and understand what to do if they do not. They develop satisfactory understanding of safe working practices. Tutors pay particular attention to the well-being of learners by developing their awareness of the dangers of unhealthy lifestyles with the support of specific workshops.
- Learners are involved in a wide range of community activities. Curriculum-linked projects provide learners with positive interactions with, for example, elderly care homes and pre-school nurseries. Learners use local communities extensively to undertake tasks such as treasure trails and 'mission impossible' activities.
- There is satisfactory teaching and learning. Learners are fully included in varied and fun activities with much useful discussion. Tutors are largely successful in keeping learners engaged. Tutors use generic lesson plans that reflect the content of the revised curriculum but not always the specific topic that is being taught.
- Tutors give insufficient priority to encourage learners to reflect and self-evaluate the skills and knowledge gained during lessons on their activity plans. They often rush this exercise at the end of a lesson and learners record comments that are too general and have a limited focus on likes and dislikes.
- Learners complete satisfactory initial assessments that result in action plans with clear targets including literacy and numeracy, where appropriate. Their progress is regularly reviewed, usually within the learning centres. Work

placement employers are insufficiently involved in learners' progress reviews, planning work tasks or training.

- The revised curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of learners. Enrichment activities enhance the curriculum offer for learners very well. Tutors and managers make good use of established partnerships to support learners' development. Learners benefit from easy access to support services, such as housing, counselling and careers, as well as to employers for work experience.
- Learners receive good care, guidance and support. Staff have a good understanding of the barriers to learning and employment that learners have and actively help them to overcome them. Learners are well motivated and positive through the support they receive.
- Curriculum management is satisfactory. Managers have revised the curriculum which is starting to improve learners' performance and progression rates. Managers and tutors pay thorough attention to the health and safety of learners. They take advantage of the good range of training and development that is available.
- Tutors and managers promote equality and diversity satisfactorily. Learners' understanding, which is satisfactory, is appropriately checked during induction and progress reviews.
- Quality assurance processes, including those for managers to observe teaching and learning, are satisfactory. Managers and tutors use feedback from learners effectively to evaluate the programme and make improvements. They do not seek sufficient formal feedback from employers. Self-assessment is thorough and involves all staff.

What does Kent Community Learning and Skills need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop and evaluate the revised curriculum to enhance progression rates.
- Develop the content of lesson plans to better reflect the specific topic that is being taught.
- Strengthen the arrangements for learners to reflect and evaluate the acquisition of skills and knowledge gained to enable more detailed and accurate recording in activity plans.
- Involve employers more in the reviews of learners' progress to help identify further training and tasks that will assist learners' development during their work placements.
- Increase the active involvement of employers in the programme design and evaluation through more structured and formal collection of their views.

Learning for social and personal development

Other social and personal development learning provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: health, public services and care, science and mathematics, agriculture, horticulture and animal care, engineering and manufacturing technologies, construction, planning and the built environment, information and communication technology, hairdressing and beauty therapy, sport, leisure and recreation, history, philosophy and theology, social sciences, education and training, foundations for learning and life, business administration and law and family learning.

Arts, media and publishing

Grade 2

Context

36. There are 11,212 learners studying part-time arts, media and publishing courses. KCLS offers 635 craft courses including ceramics, jewellery and silversmithing, bookbinding, upholstery and textiles, 458 art courses including painting and printmaking and 85 performing arts courses including dance, singing and music. Courses run during the daytime, in the evening and at weekends, with short courses during the summer. Forty of the courses are delivered in partnership with specialist art studios and workshops.

Key findings

- Learners' success rates are consistently very high and over 90%. On long courses, success rates have steadily improved over the last year despite KCLS introducing more thorough systems for target setting and recording achievement. Learners enjoy their lessons and work with enthusiasm.
- Tutors establish a supportive environment where learners develop high standards of technical and creative skills. In particular, they develop good performance skills in dance and drawing and painting techniques in fine art. Textile, upholstery and clothes making learners demonstrate skills of a professional standard. A minority of painting and craft lessons lack a creative impetus to produce ambitious work.
- Tutors and managers ensure there are good health and safety procedures in place. Learners feel safe. They use hazardous equipment and resources safely. Learners have improved health benefits, including to their concentration, mobility and improved hand function after illness or operations, particularly in dance, upholstery, ceramics and lace making.
- There is good quality teaching and learning. Most lessons are well planned with appropriate activities for the wide ability and mobility range of learners. Dance tutors meticulously plan lessons to challenge every learner to exceed their own aspirations. In the less effective lessons, learners are insufficiently inspired or challenged by the slow pace and insufficiently stimulating learning activities.
- Many learning centres have very good resources. The specialist jewellery, silversmithing, ceramics and printmaking studios are excellent. Dance studios have appropriate floors and mirrors. Painting and drawing learners who attend

lessons in the older buildings enjoy good light, high ceilings and use a wide range of materials. Tutors and learners make insufficient use of technology to enhance learning.

- On some courses, learners' progress and achievement are insufficiently recorded. Many learners maintain a comprehensive record of their achievement of targets by keeping diaries, notebooks and sketchbooks that complement their individual learning plan. However, where learners exclusively use the individual learning plan, they do not sufficiently record their personal evaluation and reflection of their work.
- Kent Community Learning and Skills has an extensive range of courses which meets the needs of learners well. Learners have access to a wide range of activities throughout the county in fine art, crafts and performing arts. New learners do not always have sufficient opportunities to join courses.
- Managers have established successful and increasing partnerships to support the development of the curriculum, many in response to community needs. They work well with partners to develop highly-specialised courses, often held on the partners' premises. Through these partnerships, learners have good opportunities to experience their subject at a professional and vocational level, particularly in Folkestone's creative quarter.
- Managers have not developed sufficient progression routes for their more established learners. New learners' ambitions are raised through courses that typically include beginners, improvers and advanced learners, but this limits the opportunity for more advanced learners to progress to a higher level. Managers are reviewing progression routes, particularly for oversubscribed courses.
- Tutors extensively promote equality and diversity in dance. They plan equality and diversity themes well into lesson plans. However, painting, drawing and craft tutors do not sufficiently include cultural and historical themes in their teaching. Managers are starting to monitor the proportion of new learners, returning learners, ethnicity and postcode data to plan future provision.
- Curriculum management is good. Managers and staff have a clear understanding of quality improvement issues and a commitment to raise standards. They regularly monitor targets for improvement. Their involvement in self-assessment is satisfactory, but the resulting report is not sufficiently critical.
- Managers and tutors make good use of the observation of teaching and learning process to improve the learners' experience. They do not sufficiently share good practice across learning centres. In particular, where tutors are using challenging activities and encouraging learners to use reflective discussion and personal evaluation diaries, this has not been effectively shared across the county.

What does Kent Community Learning and Skills need to do to improve further?

- Share good practice across the county, to ensure learners are challenged and inspired, individual learner needs are planned, achievement is better recorded and creativity stimulated in tandem with technical skills.
- Continue to review the curriculum offer to provide progression opportunities at different levels and increase the opportunity for new learners to join the more-established long courses.
- Engage learners more in discussing diverse cultural and historical themes during lessons.

Languages, literature and culture

Grade 2

Context

37. There are 3,643 learners on courses in English, creative writing, lip reading, British Sign Language (BSL) and modern foreign languages. Learners can study at, and progress between, seven different course levels. KCLS offers courses in the daytime and evening at their main learning centres as well as in local schools and community venues. Of learners 69% are women and 23% are aged over 65. KCLS has 120 tutors in this subject area.

Key findings

- Learners' success rates have been consistently high for the last three years. Learners greatly improve their confidence, social skills and self esteem. They are well motivated and make good progress, often from different starting points and levels. Progression by learners to courses at increasingly higher levels is good.
- Learners develop good skills. For many learners, their learning experience has transformed their lives. Lip reading learners re-join their community, regaining previously lost confidence. Modern foreign language learners use their language skills well helping children with their homework or communicating on holiday. Tutors actively encourage creative writing learners to enter competitions or send their work to be published.
- Learners produce a good standard of work. In particular, they lip read or use sign language accurately for sounds and shapes of words. Modern foreign language learners confidently demonstrate good language skills using complex structures and vocabulary.
- There is good teaching and learning. Tutors plan lessons well and ensure good contextualised learning that caters for a wide range of learners' needs. In the best lessons, tutors use a variety of strategies, activities and good quality resources that challenge and enhance learning. Modern foreign language learners benefit from the focused use of the target language in lessons.
- Most classrooms are well furnished and equipped. Tutors enhance the learning environment with lively displays and posters about other countries and cultures. Learners benefit from the extensive expertise and working knowledge of their tutors, many being fluent speakers, BSL users or lip readers.
- Tutors make good use of audio-visual resources in lessons. Learners develop their skills well through being able to watch drama productions and record news clips in their chosen language. Some tutors use technology and interactive whiteboards imaginatively, but not all have sufficient access to, or make use of, technology. Learners have insufficient access to computers in lessons.
- Learners receive satisfactory assessment and use feedback from their tutors to help them improve. However, many learners have poor quality individual learning targets or personal goals. Tutors do not always sufficiently review and

record learners' ongoing progress towards achievement of their targets and goals.

- Kent Community Learning and Skills offers an extensive range of courses responding well to the needs of local communities. In particular, modern foreign language learners can choose from a wide range of courses, including innovative taster sessions like 'French over lunch' and local interest courses. KCLS has established good progression routes enabling learners to move forwards.
- Managers and tutors have good and productive links with schools, community centres, libraries and the University of Kent. Managers very successfully work in partnership with primary schools and the local advisory service to increase the number of young language learners.
- Learners have satisfactory care, guidance and support. Most receive good pastoral support and help from their tutors. Learners have suitable access to specialist support and funding to assist them in completing their studies. Tutors provide appropriate help to reduce any barriers to attendance or learning. However, not all learners have sufficient access to advice and guidance.
- Curriculum management is good. Tutors have appropriate staff development that has helped increase skills and raise teaching standards. All staff and managers have received recent training in safeguarding. Although tutors share good practice effectively at local level, they have insufficient opportunities to share resources and initiatives across the whole subject area.
- Managers effectively monitor the provision and use data to make improvements. Tutors receive accurate and useful observations of teaching and learning that have raised the quality of lessons. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate.
- Managers and tutors are good at promoting equality and diversity. Learners' needs are particularly well met through a culture of inclusivity. Tutors incorporate diversity well in their classes and learning activities. Lip reading and BSL learners have a raised awareness about disability issues, giving them a greater understanding and sensitivity which they use in class and outside.

What does Kent Community Learning and Skills need to do to improve further?

- Increase the access that learners and tutors have to technology to further enhance learning.
- Widen the sharing of good practice to support the widely dispersed team in improving the standards of teaching and learning.
- Increase the consistency and accuracy of target setting and assessment through the on-going quality monitoring of individual learning plans and progress tracking.

Information about the inspection

38. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's head of quality and performance, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, Framework for Excellence indicators, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's monitoring visit and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
39. Inspectors used group, individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of the provider. They also visited learning sessions, assessments or progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in eight of the subjects the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Kent Community Learning and Skills

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. Social and personal development: all adult safeguarded provision

| Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate | Overall | 16-18 Learner responsive | 19+ Learner responsive | Employer responsive | Social and personal development |
|--|---------|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Approximate number of enrolled learners | | | | | |
| Full-time learners | 1,540 | 243 | 0 | 1,297 | 0 |
| Part-time learners | 25,686 | 252 | 6,470 | 0 | 17,964 |
| Overall effectiveness | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Capacity to improve | 2 | | | | |
| A. Outcomes for learners | | | | | |
| A. Outcomes for learners | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 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? | 2 | | | | |
| A4. Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?* | 2 | | | | |
| A5. How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?* | 2 | | | | |
| B. Quality of provision | | | | | |
| B. Quality of provision | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development? | 2 | | | | |
| B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users? | 2 | | | | |
| 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? | 3 | | | | |
| C. Leadership and management | | | | | |
| C. Leadership and management | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 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? | 2 | | | | |
| C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money? | 2 | | | | |

*where applicable to the type of provision

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