

Portsmouth Community Learning Service

Local authority

Inspection dates 22–25 February 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Managers have ensured that 'The Learning Place', where many of the community learning courses take place, is well resourced and provides an inclusive and safe learning environment.
- Learners make good progress from their starting points because tutors support them well to achieve clearly identified learning aims.
- Managers have taken decisive and successful action to improve success rates for learners on preparation for work and life courses.
- Managers maintain good community and employer partnerships and have a good awareness of the needs of local employers and the community; this is reflected in the wide range of community learning courses.
- Most tutors use learning technology well to enhance learning and make lessons more enjoyable for learners.
- Community learning programmes help most learners develop self-confidence and skills that enable them to participate in wider society and re-engage in learning.
- Good partnerships with local schools support family learning sessions that enable parents to help their children with their learning.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Learners do not all benefit from sufficient development of their English and mathematics skills while studying other subjects.
- Learners' awareness of British values and the dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism needs further development.
- Tutors' recording of learners' progress and achievement in a small proportion of the provision, including that delivered by subcontractors, requires improvement.
- Managers do not have sufficient information on how many learners go on to further study or employment after they complete their courses.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Portsmouth City Council's Community Learning Service is part of the Employment, Learning, Skills and Manufacturing group within the Transport, Environment and Business Support department. The service provides community learning courses from 'The Learning Place' in the North End district of the city and at a range of community learning venues and schools.
- Adults in Portsmouth have lower levels of qualifications and skills than adults nationally, with approximately one quarter having no qualifications at level 1 or equivalent. Unemployment is similar to cities nationally but around 1% higher than the south-east region's average.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Managers need to ensure that all tutors develop learners' English and mathematics skills well.
- Managers and tutors should further improve learners' basic understanding of British values and awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Managers need to ensure that the recording of progress and achievement is improved in a small proportion of the provision, including that which is subcontracted.
- Managers need to gather more detailed and comprehensive information on the impact of community learning on learners' lives and employment prospects when they complete their courses.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and managers have protected the community learning service well during a number of structural changes within the council which have seen the service move department since the previous inspection. They have a strong vision of the service continuing to meet the needs of the community and they work well with a wide range of partners to achieve this. For example, a range of effective courses are available for learners who have mental health problems. As a result, the community learning programme is well aligned to the local and regional priorities.
- Managers have a good understanding of the quality of the provision. They achieve this by ensuring that the views of all key stakeholders, including learners and tutors, are secured during a thorough and accurate self-assessment process. Managers have not yet finalised an up-to-date version of the self-assessment report; however, they are well aware of the majority of key strengths and areas for improvement identified by inspectors.
- Managers have a good understanding of the quality of the subcontracted provision. This is achieved through frequent meetings and through joint observations of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers are aware that the recording of progress and achievement for the small number of learners in this provision requires improvement.
- Tutors benefit from a good and increasing range of professional development opportunities including useful e-learning packages. This improved approach is a direct result of leaders implementing improved employment contracts for tutors. These new contracts give tutors time for planning, preparation, training and sharing good practice. Tutors also benefit from accurate observations of their performance and detailed, constructive feedback that helps them continually improve.
- Managers place a high priority on providing good information, advice and guidance. This includes the opportunity for all learners to receive high-quality, impartial information, advice and guidance from a National Careers Service adviser.
- Managers have not placed sufficient emphasis on the integration and development of English and mathematics skills in other courses, apart from in family learning where learners develop these skills well. They have, however, ensured that learners continue to have the opportunity to improve English and mathematics skills by gaining qualifications through a range of functional skills courses.
- Managers have successfully introduced a small number of apprenticeships for young people employed by the council on training contracts. They have ensured that well-trained assessors work closely with workplace managers so that apprentices develop the skills and knowledge most needed for their job roles. Managers have been less successful in the introduction of traineeships; there were no trainees at the time of the inspection. Advanced plans are in place to relaunch more focused traineeships.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - As a local authority provision, the service has no governors. Senior managers are aware of the performance of the service in sufficient detail to enable them to provide effective support and challenge. This support has been particularly important and effective during a period when the service manager post has not been filled due to financial uncertainty and other managers have successfully taken on additional responsibilities.
 - Managers set performance targets for the service within higher-level business plans and regularly review progress against them. Senior managers respond decisively to challenges, for example changing tutor contracts to enable them to have more time for professional development to help improve success rates for learners on functional skills English and mathematics courses.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Managers undertake appropriate safeguarding checks on staff and keep a complete central record of these checks. All staff are trained in safeguarding and are aware of their responsibilities. Any concerns are reported to the designated safeguarding lead for the council. Staff have also been trained in the 'Prevent' strategy and are aware of their responsibilities should they identify any concerns about extremism or radicalisation.
 - Learners know how to keep themselves safe online and have a basic awareness of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. They also know who to contact if they have any concerns because tutors brief them well during induction and there are a range of prominently displayed posters to remind them. Managers have not ensured that tutors are confident enough to lead discussions to help learners broaden and develop their understanding of the issues surrounding extremism and the relevance of British values.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good in the majority of learning activities. Most tutors are highly skilled in meeting the needs of learners with a range of abilities and aspirations; a high degree of enjoyment and interaction between learners and staff supports learning well. Most tutors use skilful questioning techniques to help learners work out ways to develop strategies to achieve their goals. For example, they ask learners how they would achieve specific results when using graphic-design projects and then to share their ideas with other learners. This helps build confidence and improves their self-esteem. A small minority of sessions are uninspiring and tutors do not always recognise that learners are losing interest.
- Tutors are well qualified and experienced and in most sessions they ensure that learners participate well. Many have additional experience of working with vulnerable adults either professionally or through volunteering and use this experience well to support learners.
- Most tutors on courses that do not lead to qualifications recognise and record the progress learners make well. They identify detailed and useful individual learning goals and regularly review them with the learners. Tutors in a very small proportion of the provision, including that which is delivered through the subcontractor, do not recognise and record learners' progress and achievement in sufficient detail.
- Learners are highly motivated to learn. Their work is of a high standard and they make good progress towards their agreed learning aims. Learners use their new skills confidently, for example making high-quality earrings in a craft class. In a small minority of learning sessions tutors do not challenge the more-able learners sufficiently.
- Tutors prepare good-quality resources and teaching materials that support teaching and learning well. Most tutors successfully use information learning technology to enliven learning.
- Functional skills tutors use an online programme to assess and identify learners' English and mathematics starting points and to develop good individualised learning plans. Tutors ensure that learners have access to additional learning resources by signposting them to appropriate internet links and online resources. A minority of tutors do not routinely reinforce learners' English and mathematical skills and miss opportunities to improve these skills, for example during weighing and measuring in practical subjects.
- Managers' observations of tutors' teaching, learning and assessment practice are effective. They identify clear areas for improvement and work closely with tutors to support them to improve. Tutors value this support.
- Family learning is good. Tutors work in close partnership with family support assistants in local schools to ensure that the learning meets the needs of parents and their children. Learners speak highly of this learning and they rapidly gain an improved understanding of how their children learn. These sessions also enable parents to improve their English and mathematics skills. Many learners progress from these courses to more formal English, mathematics or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses.
- Assessors carry out frequent and effective assessment and progress review visits to the small number of apprentices working in council departments. Assessors work well with employer managers to identify appropriate assessment opportunities and to ensure apprentices develop skills and knowledge that are closely matched to job needs. Apprentices also benefit from good off-the-job training sessions and good email or telephone support from assessors.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

- Learners enjoy their community learning courses and significantly improve their self-confidence, self-esteem and interpersonal skills which help them participate more fully in their communities. Many re-engage in learning and their enthusiastic tutors inspire them to enrol on additional courses, some leading to qualifications. A small number of learners gain skills that help them find employment. The service provides very effective courses and one-to-one learning sessions for learners with emotional and mental health difficulties. Tutors successfully improve these learners' confidence and self-esteem and enable many to progress to a wider range of courses.
- Learners work well together and happily support each other to learn. They treat each other, and tutors, with respect.
- Learners develop skills and produce work at standards which are at least appropriate to their level of study. Many of the more-able learners produce work that is well above the required standards. However, tutors do not challenge these learners sufficiently well to make more rapid progress.
- Managers and tutors set high expectations for attendance and punctuality through a regularly reinforced 'learner charter'. Attendance and punctuality are good except for a minority of learners on craft-based community learning courses.

- Managers have not ensured that all tutors plan effectively to help all learners improve their English and mathematical skills while on most courses in other subjects. Parents on family learning courses develop their English and mathematics skills very well.
- Learners benefit from good, impartial information, advice and guidance. Tutors successfully encourage most learners to attend interviews with National Careers Service advisers. In addition to good advice and the development of useful skills action plans they receive support to produce effective curriculum vitae and job application letters. Learners seeking employment also receive good support and advice from well-trained volunteers during information technology drop-in sessions. Learners who are uncertain which English, ESOL or mathematics course to enrol on benefit from a pre-entry skills check and good advice on which courses will best meet their learning needs.
- Learners feel, and are, safe; they are aware of who to contact if they have any concerns. They are very aware of online safety issues but have only a rudimentary awareness of extremism, radicalisation and British values.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- As a result of good teaching, learning and assessment, learners make good progress from their accurately identified starting points; there is no significant variation in the progress or achievement of different groups of learners. Virtually all learners on community learning courses that do not lead to qualifications achieve their learning aims.
- Following low achievement levels for preparation for work and life courses in 2013/14 the provider's own data show that the wide range of actions taken by managers and tutors have been successful. A high proportion of learners on these courses now achieve their qualifications. Success rates for learners on food hygiene courses are excellent.
- Learners enjoy their courses and develop skills and knowledge that help them in everyday life. For example, parents on family learning courses improve their English and mathematical skills to enable them to better understand and support their children's learning. Many of these parents are inspired by their family learning experience and progress on to functional skills courses in English or mathematics to further develop these skills and to gain qualifications. Overall, a high proportion of learners who take these courses progress on to higher-level functional skills courses.
- The large majority of apprentices progress to employment, higher apprenticeships, further or higher education on completion of their programmes. The majority of the trainees on the first traineeship programmes progressed into employment, apprenticeships or further education.
- Learners benefit from tutors' expertise in craft skills and develop high-level practical skills. Many produce work to a very high standard; for example, learners make high-quality cushion covers on the weaving course.

Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,700
Principal/CEO	Mr Alan Cufley
Website address	www.learningportsmouth.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)		327		23				
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	2	2	1	5				
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Highbury College 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Mark Shackleton, lead inspector

Alun Maddocks

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the operations manager employment, learning and skills, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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