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Ms Harriet Duncan
Adult Learning and Employment Manager
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council
Town Hall
Hornton Street
London
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Dear Ms Duncan

Short inspection of Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council

Following the short inspection on 9 and 10 May 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in May 2014.

This provider continues to be good.

Senior leaders and managers in the local authority, and in the subcontracted partners who deliver most of the provision, have ensured that the strengths of the provision identified at the previous inspection are still evident. Learners continue to achieve well and develop the skills and knowledge they need to help them in their personal lives and in taking their next steps in learning and employment. Many develop new social networks, increase their self-confidence and improve their health and well-being.

Learners are keen to learn and enjoy attending their classes. Those whose first language is not English develop their spoken English skills well, including their pronunciation and vocabulary. This helps them in their everyday lives and enables them to secure employment and gain promotion at work.

Managers ensure that the learning programmes offered continue to meet a wide range of needs in the community. Courses aimed at older residents help reduce feelings of isolation and promote their mental and physical well-being. Managers have successfully increased the number of courses that lead to qualifications. Learners taking these courses achieve well. This was a weakness at the previous inspection. A high proportion of those taking basic skills qualifications in English and mathematics pass their examinations.

Managers have been slow to address a few of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The attendance of learners remains low and the recording of the achievement of learners on courses that do not lead to qualifications is still too inconsistent.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Managers in the local authority keep clear and detailed records of safeguarding incidents across the provision. This was a weakness at the previous inspection. Learners feel safe and know who to turn to if they have concerns about themselves or the welfare of others. They are confident that staff and managers will act on any concerns they might have.

Well-established subcontracted partners in the area understand well the safeguarding needs of the communities they serve. Managers and staff in partner agencies are alert in identifying learners who, for example, experience domestic violence or are in danger of radicalisation. Managers and staff take appropriate action to protect vulnerable learners.

In June 2017, the Grenfell Tower fire had a significant impact on learners living in the local area. Managers from the learning and employment service responded swiftly and effectively, including with their subcontractors, to support their learners. Senior leaders provided additional funding that enabled subcontractors to provide immediate additional support for learners involved in this event.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and, in the main, provide effective challenge to subcontracted partners to improve the quality of their work. Managers provide senior leaders with good management information that helps senior leaders support them in developing the provision.
- Local authority managers work well with partners to extend access to provision for the different communities that the local authority aims to engage. Managers and partners ensure that the provision attracts new learners and those from the borough's most deprived wards.
- Specialist partners, for example those who support learners with disabilities and charities with expert local knowledge, help broaden both the curriculum on offer and the participation of target groups, including older learners. Through subcontracted partners, learners access a wide range of additional support such as counselling and debt advice.
- Managers effectively review the performance of subcontracted partners and hold them to account for the quality of their provision. At regular monitoring meetings, managers use a wide range of management information that helps partners reflect on their performance.
- Arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are effective. Managers make accurate judgements of the quality of teaching,

learning and assessment. Their analysis of the quality of teaching and learning results in a range of useful training and development activities for tutors. Where needed, managers ensure that individual tutors receive additional support to help them improve their teaching skills.

- Managers work well with staff in partner organisations to help build their capacity to ensure that good-quality teaching, learning and assessment take place. Managers carry out joint lesson observations with new staff that help them to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- Staff conducting observations of teaching, learning and assessment do not record the progress that learners make well enough. This makes it difficult for managers to have an accurate overview of the progress that current learners are making.
- Learners articulate their aspirations well and the large majority achieve. However, tutors do not consistently record learners' aspirations and achievements well enough, despite much training and effort by managers. Too much recording lacks detail about how learners will achieve their targets.
- In the best examples, good individual target setting supports learners well to take practical steps to improve their skills. For example, learners who speak English as an additional language improve their pronunciation and their ability to communicate in the community and on the telephone.
- Learners succeed because tutors skilfully encourage and motivate them. Learners have access to a wide range of opportunities to discuss their next steps. Dedicated information, advice and guidance sessions at centres, discussions in classes and one-to-one support from experienced tutors with specialist knowledge support learners' progression well.
- Learners have a good understanding of how their course and what they are learning will support them in achieving their goals. They value the learning and the support that they receive from their tutors.
- The large majority of learners who completed courses last year said that their learning helped them achieve their ambitions. The majority of learners who progress after their studies move on to further learning related to the subject they studied previously and others enter employment and volunteering roles.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have been slow to rectify the poor attendance of learners. Managers have implemented a consistent approach to the reporting of learners' attendance. As a result, leaders and managers now have an accurate overview of attendance across the range of subcontracted provision.
- While managers have employed different strategies to improve the attendance of learners, such as improved follow-up of learners' absence, these steps have not led to the desired improvements. A minority of partners accept the poor attendance of learners too readily.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- managers and partners implement a comprehensive strategy to improve the attendance of learners
- tutors effectively record the progress and achievement of learners so that leaders and managers have an accurate picture of performance
- records of observations of teaching, learning and assessment capture the progress that learners make.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jon Bowman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the adult learning and employment manager, as nominee, assisted two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector. We met with you, senior leaders, managers, tutors and learners. We carried out lesson observations and took account of the most recent self-assessment report and development plans and the previous inspection report. We used group and individual interviews and telephone calls to gather the views of learners, staff and partners. We scrutinised data and information on the performance of the service and reviewed lesson plans, key policy documents and records of safeguarding concerns.