

Inspection dates

14–17 June 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
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings**This is a good provider**

- Many different groups of learners, particularly those who have not previously taken part in education, employment or training, now successfully follow courses that improve their lives.
- Managers and tutors have been successful in providing high-quality, accessible courses locally for learners in their communities.
- As a consequence of good teaching, learning and assessment, learners enjoy their courses, make good progress and undertake further learning.
- Senior leaders provide clear strategic direction, good scrutiny and challenge to the performance of managers and tutors; they know the strengths of the service and how to improve its weaker areas.
- The service is well led and managed and enhanced by the expertise, commitment and enthusiasm of its tutors.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Tutors do not set learners precise and clear targets to ensure that they all make rapid progress.
- Not enough teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding because tutors do not provide enough challenge in classes to stretch the most capable learners.
- Training to raise learners' awareness of fundamental British values and the risks of radicalisation and extremism has not had sufficient impact.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Kent Community Learning and Skills (KCLS) is a local authority provider with 15 main centres across the county of Kent. KCLS also offers provision in settings such as schools, children's centres and community centres, and in conjunction with other partners such as voluntary organisations.
- KCLS provides a wide range of programmes for adults that lead to qualifications, including GCSE mathematics and English, as well as programmes designed to encourage personal and community development, including family learning. It also offers courses targeted at 16–18-year-old learners, particularly those who are not currently in education, employment or training. In addition, it runs apprenticeships for 16–18-year-olds and those over the age of 19.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Raise the standard of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that tutors use effective classroom strategies, including more accurate target setting, to stretch the most capable learners and speed up learners' progress.
- Ensure tutors have the skills and confidence they need to routinely raise learners' awareness of fundamental British values and the risks of extremism.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Senior leaders and managers have successfully maintained the good quality of KCLS over the six years since the previous inspection. They have sustained the major strengths identified at that time, such as the good strategic planning, good outcomes for learners including apprentices and the high quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders and managers have also secured improvements in other important areas. These include increasing the proportion of learners who are new to adult learning programmes each year, and the use of performance information to monitor the service's effectiveness. They have successfully undertaken a major reorganisation while ensuring that managers, tutors and staff remain highly motivated and committed to improving the quality of provision.
- Senior leaders link the aims of the service effectively to the key strategic objectives of the local authority. Managers successfully engage the different groups of people such as families in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and people seeking skills for employment or training. Managers have increased the numbers of apprentices significantly over the last few years.
- Through effective planning of the curriculum and evaluation of teaching, senior leaders and managers have demonstrated their high ambitions for learners and commitment to improving the life chances of the most vulnerable across the county. The provision of study programmes to engage young people who are not in education, training or employment has been successful.
- Managers use relevant information on local employment and communities to plan programmes well. This is effective in meeting the needs and interests of local residents and, as a consequence, an increasing proportion of learners from the county's most disadvantaged areas are now taking part in courses. For example, specific programmes engage learners from the Nepalese community, Syrian refugee families, unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors and learners with severe mental health problems.
- Many productive partnerships with voluntary organisations, local charities, children's centres and education providers have resulted in local people realising the power of taking part in learning and training and its potential to improve their lives.
- Learners receive good advice and guidance on their next steps once they have completed courses. Managers are now extending a very successful pilot programme for learners' progression routes in mid Kent to learners across the county.
- Managers accurately identify the strengths and areas for improvement of KCLS through effective self-assessment. The process engages partners, governors and tutors well. Managers assess KCLS's performance appropriately using up-to-date and relevant information.
- Tutors improve their teaching and assessment as a result of good, relevant and well-planned continuous professional development. The training arises from observations of teaching, which accurately identify what tutors do well and what they need to do to improve.
- Managers use the results of observations on teaching and learning well. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the provision. However, their observations do not make effective use of learners' views when assessing teaching and learning, and not all observers pay sufficient attention to learners' progress in lessons.
- Managers provide good support and challenge to their subcontracted partners. They regularly review their performance and help with the development of sound safeguarding policies. This contributes significantly to ensuring the quality of training received by learners is good.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Senior leaders provide very good oversight of the service by regularly and carefully reviewing and evaluating performance. As a result, they have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement of the service.
 - Senior leaders offer good support to managers, tutors and learners and attend celebration events that demonstrate their commitment to them. They diligently ensure that managers have the appropriate resources to continue to develop the service in line with the local authority's strategy.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Senior leaders regularly review safeguarding practice. Managers maintain a good oversight of safeguarding incidents and regularly review staff practice. Learners report feeling safe and know who to contact should they have worries over their own or others' well-being.

- Managers follow safe recruitment and selection practices when appointing new staff. Managers make use of clear and effective procedures to decide the suitability of applicants. They pursue areas of concern promptly if, for example, pre-employment checks raise concerns about potential staff.
- Managers have taken well-considered action to implement measures for dealing with extremism and radicalisation. They have a close working relationship with the area 'Prevent' coordinator. Tutors have received well-planned and thoughtful training and are introducing the principles of fundamental British values into lessons. However, not all tutors and managers have the confidence and skills to raise learners' awareness of the rule of law, value of democracy and the risks of radicalisation effectively during their lessons.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Tutors have high expectations of learners and make lessons enjoyable so that learners make good progress and achieve their learning goals. Therefore, learners want to continue in learning, and they receive constructive and helpful advice to guide them onto their next courses.
- The skilful teaching of tutors supports the good development of learners' English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. In work-based learning, assessors' emphasis on the importance of developing good spelling and presentation skills helps learners to acquire good ways of working.
- Well-designed exercises in which apprentices simulate professional interaction with clients, customers and colleagues capture apprentices' interest and improve their verbal communication skills.
- Learners benefit from the careful planning by tutors which makes lessons relevant to their everyday life and work. For example, learners develop their skills in mathematics well by assessing the service and costs in a variety of businesses and comparing them with practices in their own work placement.
- Tutors make lessons relevant and interesting. For example, learners on study programmes, most of whom were previously not in education, experience well-planned, individual programmes based on live work-related projects.
- Tutors identify learners' additional learning needs quickly and provide effective help which enables them to make rapid progress. As a result, they develop confidence in communicating and presenting their work, engage well in group discussions, and improve their English skills. For example, parents attending family learning courses improve their communication and parenting skills through the supportive and sensitive tutoring they experience.
- Tutors' assessment of learners' work is thorough, timely and accurate. Their oral feedback is encouraging and helpful; their written comments are constructive and clearly show areas for development so that learners know what they need to do to improve.
- Tutors assess learners' starting points carefully and thoroughly at the start of their courses. Learners receive appropriate individual learning plans that tutors use well to record progress. Pottery learners assess their own development well by using sketchbooks to review their progress.
- Tutors and learners make good use of the high-quality learning technology facilities to support their learning and study. Learners also make very good use of an excellent online learning resource that enhances their ability to learn independently. This gives them easy access to learning materials prepared for specific classes, as well as to a comprehensive range of additional learning materials such as an online GCSE English course.
- Target setting in lessons to help learners improve their skills and progress is too variable. Not enough learners and particularly apprentices receive clear and precise targets that indicate the skills and knowledge they should develop.
- Tutors pay close and effective attention to helping learners who struggle during classroom sessions, and are vigilant in ensuring they do not fall behind their peers. However, their planning does not provide activities to stretch the most capable learners.
- Learners study in calming, supportive and safe environments where the respect for differences and tolerance as set out in fundamental British values are evident. Learners feel safe.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

- Many learners demonstrate enthusiasm for learning and acquiring qualifications for the first time since leaving formal education. As a result of attending short courses they overcome their nervousness about studying, become more confident and improve their communication skills.
- Award ceremonies and celebration of learners' achievements highlight learners' successes and demonstrate effectively tutors' and managers' work in raising learners' aspirations. Learners take pride in

the often small but significant steps they make. They broaden their horizons and acquire knowledge of how to improve themselves through the encouraging help and guidance they receive.

- Many learners gain qualifications in English as a result of taking part in introductory sessions. These sessions enable them to overcome anxieties caused by previous failure and allow them to cultivate unrecognised talents. For example, children in one family now benefit in their reading and enjoyment of nursery rhymes with the help of their grandmother. She recently achieved a functional skills English qualification, having previously been very unconfident and frustrated by her own lack of competence.
- Learners improve their basic mathematics and English skills through the help given by skilled and experienced tutors at drop-in centres across the county. They learn to persevere, attend regularly and acquire regular routines for study as a result of the encouragement and support of tutors who understand their circumstances well.
- Having gained a qualification and greater confidence, learners often undertake voluntary work with local charities or in shops. For many, this is the first step towards securing paid employment and greater independence.
- A parent who recently gained employment as a teaching assistant exemplifies the route of many learners from introductory courses to gaining employment. This was the eventual outcome after attending a family learning course at a school, then volunteering and achieving a teaching assistant qualification.
- Learners at local centres, called 'Skills Plus', and at the other adult and community learning bases receive good, practical advice and guidance to help them decide on their next steps towards further learning, gaining qualifications or employment. Learners receive good coaching in how to make their own choices, which results in them becoming more self-reliant and independent in their decision-making.
- Learners seeking employment get good professional assistance on short courses designed to enhance their abilities and confidence. Tutors provide insightful and expert assistance on writing curriculum vitae, job interviews and self-presentation techniques.
- Learners who have experienced health problems, particularly mental health or depression, embark on the route back into work and education as a result of regaining their self-esteem and self-belief. They build their self-confidence through participation both in specially designed therapeutic courses and through leisure courses such as walking, yoga, art or Tai Chi. The impact of the 'Learning Well' project for people experiencing stress and anxiety is excellent.
- Most apprentices improve their skills related to their jobs. For example, apprentices on childcare courses improve their ability to manage children's behaviour effectively.
- Learners have a good knowledge of health and safety requirements and safeguarding matters such as online safety, grooming and bullying. They are respectful of each other and know how to report concerns. The extent of learners' knowledge about the risks of different forms of extremism and how fundamental British values affect their lives is too variable across the service.
- Learners' attendance on courses leading to qualifications is good but attendance at leisure and recreational courses is not high enough.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- The majority of learners are adults on leisure, recreational and personal development courses that do not lead to a formal qualification. A high proportion of learners are apprentices and learners on courses leading to employment or to a qualification. A small proportion of learners are 16–18-year-olds following study programmes.
- The vast majority of learners and apprentices make good progress. Most gain their qualifications. They attain high standards of work in academic subjects such as mathematics and English, and on practical courses. For example, the high quality of learners' work in pottery, jewellery and silver craft enables them to sell what they make.
- Many learners who do not have any formal qualifications when they start their courses make good progress from low starting points. Their attendance and achievement of certificates and short course qualifications are good and reflect enjoyment of their study.
- Most learners on short courses develop skills to help them progress into employment or training. Most gain their qualifications and many progress to further courses that lead to employment.
- The proportion of apprentices gaining their qualification is above national averages and is good. The vast majority of learners studying in the workplace gain their qualifications. Many apprentices gain promotion or advancement in their jobs, and the vast majority secure permanent employment on completion of their apprenticeships.

- The proportion of adult learners gaining grades A* to C in mathematics and English GCSEs is high and well above national rates. Not enough learners aged 16–18 gain their GCSE qualifications in mathematics and English, although numbers are small.
- Most learners on study programmes gain their main qualification, which for many is in customer service. However, study programme learners' achievement of English and mathematics functional skills qualifications is low.
- The vast majority of study programme learners who were previously not in education, employment or training and whose prior academic attainment is low make good progress relative to their starting points. They complete their main qualification and progress into further learning or employment.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes

are good

- Adult learners make up the vast majority of all learners; they study on part-time courses covering a wide range of subjects.
- Learners improve their skills and knowledge of English and mathematics through expert and effective teaching, and in response to the high expectations of their tutors. The location of centres enables them to attend courses close to them and as a result the vast majority continue their studies at higher levels.
- Learners understand the importance of improving their English and mathematics skills as a result of the helpful guidance and good teaching in these subjects. Tutors carefully plan lessons based on the assessments of learners' starting points, helping each to consolidate new information well.
- Learners in classes for English for speakers of other languages quickly become proficient in understanding and using English. Tutors answer questions authoritatively, and provide good clear oral feedback and explanations which help learners to improve their knowledge, skills and confidence in speaking and writing.
- Learners in recreational and leisure courses learn quickly and enjoy the benefit of well-qualified and experienced tutors who combine theoretical and practical use of their subjects well. For example, learners in Spanish classes enjoy the anecdotes of life in Spain with challenges given to interpret difficult grammatical structures.
- Tutors and learning support assistants provide good help to learners with additional support needs or learning difficulties. They are aware of what individual learners should be doing in each lesson and give good support which ensures the learners do not fall behind.
- In creative subjects, learners develop new skills and improve the standards of their work. Learners in pottery classes, for example, master basic techniques and then refine specific skills such as throwing and shaping, or develop more complex technical expertise when designing and making objects in unusual shapes.
- New learners develop an affinity with their tutors and the service. Many continue on courses at the next level or different courses because of the satisfaction they gain and their enjoyment of working with other learners. They take pride in the regular displays of their high-quality work. Some learners also develop useful enterprise skills for starting a business.
- Learners feel safe at the centres, where the atmosphere is harmonious and respectful. Although tutors receive training on promoting equality and diversity and fundamental British values, they do not sufficiently raise and explore in lessons topics relating to life in modern Britain in everyday lessons.

Apprenticeships

are good

- There are 417 apprentices currently in learning. The large majority follow apprenticeships in business administration while small numbers are apprentices in health and social care, supporting teaching and learning, and warehousing.
- Learners receive very good training in the workplace. Their employers provide good supervision, coaching and mentoring. Close working with tutors ensures that training for learners away from their workplace complements the needs of their job roles effectively. Learners use the time away from their work sensibly to complete assessment tasks.
- Through the apprenticeship, learners gain relevant experience by shadowing experienced colleagues; they acquire knowledge that helps them develop a good understanding of the businesses where they work. Many take on additional responsibilities and gain promotion.

- Tutors provide effective individual help to learners, which enables them to make good progress. The sound planning of tutors and their careful attention to involving learners in discussing their progress enhance learners' knowledge, particularly for their technical certificates.
- Learners become much more confident in their ability as a result of their apprenticeships. They become more forward-looking and focused on developing their careers. They build good skills in areas such as managing customer service or children's behaviour. Learners also develop good independent learning skills and the diligent research skills their qualification requires.
- Learners working towards functional skills qualifications develop their English, mathematics and information and communication technology skills well. They improve their skills and pass their examinations through effective coaching from tutors and the good use of online resources the service provides.
- Many learners work towards functional skills qualifications at a level higher than that required for their qualification. However, a few learners who already possess English and mathematics qualifications do not routinely receive sufficient help and instruction to improve these skills further.
- Learners make good progress because of tutors using results from assessments well. For example, tutors use results from the assessment learners complete when they start their apprenticeships to plan appropriate work and projects that build effectively on their starting points.
- Tutors set high expectations for the quality of learners' work, and learners respond with work of a good standard. Learners receive good constructive spoken feedback from tutors which gives them a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve work in their portfolios of evidence. However, written targets to help learners improve their skills are often too vague.
- Learners receive good advice and guidance throughout their apprenticeships that helps them to plan what they might do next. Towards the end, they receive clear information and advice about what they can do next. As a result, many progress to higher-level apprenticeships.

Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	31,014
Principal/CEO	Terry Burgess
Website address	www.communitylearningandskills.com

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)	645	24,738	175	3,478	0	1,161	0	72
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	277	252	37	129	0		24	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	22		4					
Number of learners aged 14-16	0							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ First Intuition ■ Hi Kent 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Peter Green, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jon Bowman, assistant lead	Her Majesty's Inspector
Megan Whittaker	Ofsted Inspector
Harpreet Nagra	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Adkins	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the head of curriculum & quality 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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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