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Mr Paul Hoffman
Principal
Surrey Adult Learning
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Dear Mr Hoffman

Short inspection of Surrey County Council

Following the short inspection on 10–11 May 2016, 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 December 2010.

This provider continues to be good.

The strengths observed at the previous inspection have been maintained and there has been good progress to address the identified areas for improvement. The council has good oversight of the provision and provides appropriate support and challenge to all proposed initiatives.

Outcomes for learners have remained good and learners make good progress on all courses. Success rates for accredited courses are high and learners on courses which do not lead to qualifications achieve their learning goals. Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Managers have continued to extend the outreach provision to disadvantaged areas within the county, and are exploring initiatives to introduce apprenticeships and programmes for people with mental health issues.

Surrey County Council Adult Learning continues to provide a good service for the county and offers a wide variety of good-quality educational experiences. Provision for learners with specific learning needs is particularly good.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and managers continue to keep learners safe. All staff have had the appropriate security checks and managers check the records of all staff to ensure that they are up to date. Learners feel safe and know what to do if they have any issues relating to safeguarding. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding and they monitor any potential safeguarding issues closely. The few safeguarding actualities identified from a large number of potential issues were dealt with appropriately. Nearly all staff have completed the 'Prevent' duty training and the one related potential issue was managed effectively.

Inspection findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates on accredited courses are high. Nearly all learners on courses which do not lead to qualifications achieve their learning aims. Learners take pride in their work which is of a high standard. Learners gain confidence and acquire new practical, creative and technical skills.
- Staff deliver good-quality teaching, learning and assessment. The management of observations of teaching and learning is very thorough and the provision of opportunities for continuing professional development are very good. Managers give good support for tutors to attain a good standard of teaching.
- Staff go out of their way to ensure that they meet the specific needs of learners with a wide variety of different barriers to learning. There is not always sufficient access to, and use of, information technology, and some tutors do not always check learners' understanding sufficiently well.
- The promotion of safeguarding is effective, as is tutors' good promotion of learners' awareness of equality and diversity and British values. Tutors and learners have a good understanding of these issues.
- Support, care and guidance for learners are very good. Initial assessment is very thorough and learners have ample opportunity to disclose any particular learning needs discreetly. Support for learning needs is available from the council as well as from external specialist help. Information, advice and guidance are good with effective signposting to other providers if courses are not available or not in the right location.
- At the previous inspection, inspectors judged that leadership and management were good and they remain so. The senior management team has a clear strategic vision which matches the priorities of the council's community needs effectively. Work is beginning to explore the expansion of provision to include apprenticeships and courses for learners with mental health issues.
- Governance is robust with a council member who is actively involved in the management of the provision and exercises appropriate challenge to any strategic initiatives. Strategic management is good and ensures that the provision meets the needs of the community. Communication is good and all staff have performance targets derived from the strategic management plan.

- Partnership working with local schools, colleges and charities is very good and provides good support and choice for learners. Provision across the county is well planned with no unnecessary duplication.

Leaders and managers have taken action to improve the quality of the provision and have moved the provision forward. The impact is clear:

- The proportion of good or better teaching has increased significantly.
- The identification and dissemination of good practice is now good with improved communication between teams and frequent meetings.
- Work is in progress to develop an effective and accessible virtual learning environment.
- Managers monitor learners' progress more effectively and there is good recording of learners' destinations.
- Tutors promote learners' understanding of equality and diversity much better.
- The use of data to manage the provision is much improved.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- adequate wi-fi cover is available at all venues and they further develop the virtual learning environment
- they explore provision for apprenticeships and for those learners with mental health issues
- tutors check learners' understanding in classes.

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

Yours sincerely

Charles Clark
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection we were assisted by the deputy principal as nominee. We met you, senior leaders and members of your staff. We visited four of your main venues to meet with staff and learners, observe teaching, learning and assessment, and look at learners' work. We reviewed key documents including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of learners and tutors by seeking the views of learners and partners during on-site inspection activity.

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