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Dear Ms Dale

Short inspection of Adult Education in Gloucestershire

Following the short inspection on 3 and 4 October 2017, 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 January 2014.

This provider continues to be good.

Leaders and managers in Adult Education in Gloucestershire (AEiG) have successfully maintained the good quality of all aspects of provision identified at the previous inspection, while also restructuring and reorganising the service to ensure that it better meets local and regional economic priorities. These actions have created upheaval and some uncertainties for staff, but have largely been managed well by senior leaders. The service has now entered a period of greater stability and consolidation. New arrangements for governance have very recently been implemented, working to terms of reference more tightly focused on meeting local employment, skills and enterprise needs.

AEiG's leaders and managers have focused strongly on maintaining and further improving the high standards identified at the previous inspection; however, a few weaknesses remain. For example, senior leaders are well aware that aspects of teaching, learning and assessment are not yet consistently effective and as a result, they are implementing appropriate improvement strategies; these are a work in progress. AEiG's teaching staff are skilled, motivated and professional. The great majority of learners enjoy their classes and benefit from their learning; most make good progress and gain new knowledge and practical skills, and boost their self-confidence. The provision for adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a particular strength of AEiG's provision.

Safeguarding is effective.

AEiG's leaders and managers have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and appropriate action is taken to safeguard learners. New and existing AEiG staff and subcontractors are trained well in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Carefully prepared booklets and visual aids are used well during induction sessions to introduce learners to safeguarding themes. As a result, AEiG's learners are well aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Learners feel safe and know whom they should ask for help. The impact of leaflets and posters about safeguarding arrangements developed specifically for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.

Safeguarding themes are reinforced effectively during teaching sessions in ways that are accessible and relevant, for example by making links between fundamental British values and group values such as tolerance, listening to each other and adhering to rules.

A very few learners have disclosed safeguarding-related concerns in their personal lives to members of AEiG's staff in the past year. These have been reported quickly to the designated AEiG managers. They in turn have taken prompt and effective action to support the learners and involved appropriate external agencies, specialist social workers and the police where required.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry reviewed the impact of the restructuring of the service since the previous inspection and whether this had hindered or improved the effectiveness of the provision. AEiG's leaders and managers have maintained the good quality of the provision despite the upheaval and uncertainties experienced by staff during the management and organisational restructure of the service during 2016 and the early part of 2017. AEiG's leaders and managers continue to be very effective at developing and implementing the service's mission of supporting and developing the skills of adult learners with pre-entry and entry-level employability skills. AEiG's motivated and highly professional staff understand and embody this mission well.
- AEiG's leaders maintain an effective working relationship with Gloucestershire County Council, which now includes clearer lines of accountability, supervision and performance management arrangements. AEiG's strategic priorities are now more tightly aligned to those of the local authority and the local enterprise partnership while the service remains true to its core mission.
- AEiG's leaders, managers and staff are skilled at identifying what is working well and what needs to be improved. The self-assessment report is concise, evaluative and inclusive, identifying almost all the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. Quality improvement planning is focused on actions that are time-bound and specific. For example, the arrangements for observing the quality of teaching and learning across all AEiG's programmes are identified as requiring improvement. Observations are not all designed to focus on the impact

of teaching and training on learning. As a result, senior leaders are devising new approaches. AEiG's leaders have also recognised that the quality of data on the achievement of learning goals on non-accredited programmes is not sufficiently reliable. They are in the process of redesigning the management information system.

- During the past year, AEiG's leaders have implemented some new ways of working and introduced new management and supervisory roles. The impact of these is largely positive. For example, AEiG's new team of learning coordinators has had success in recruiting new learners to first steps provision, employability programmes and programmes for learners with mental health problems. However, they have not had sufficient impact on improving the quality of all teachers' assessment practice.
- The next line of enquiry reviewed the effectiveness of the recently formed governing body on improving the provision and setting strategic direction. Revised governance arrangements have been implemented only very recently and so far have had minimal impact. The new governing body had met only once at the time of this inspection. However, governors have received comprehensive qualitative and quantitative information on the range and quality of the service and have provided some direct challenges to AEiG's leadership team, including the need for clearer data. The governing body has been established under new terms of reference, which include a stronger focus on meeting local employment and skills priorities, vocational training and the needs of the voluntary sector.
- The third line of enquiry reviewed whether there were sufficient subcontractors to deliver the range of planned courses. AEiG's leaders have reduced the number of its subcontractors significantly since the previous inspection to provide specialist services for adult learners with learning disabilities and difficulties. AEiG's and council managers' support, performance monitoring and management arrangements for the three current subcontractors are effective.
- My fourth line of enquiry reviewed whether the outcomes for learners on programmes leading to qualifications had improved. Learners' attainment of qualifications on the relatively small number of accredited programmes is now very high, and has been so for the past three years. The achievement of learning goals on non-accredited programmes is less clear as the data is not based on consistently sound assessments of learners' progress relative to their starting points. However, all learners interviewed by inspectors could identify, and often demonstrated enthusiastically, the progress they had made, for example in their language, writing or mathematics skills and their personal development.
- The next line of enquiry reviewed whether the provision for adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities had remained a strength since the previous inspection. AEiG's managers and subcontractors continue to offer very effective recreational courses for adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This aspect of AEiG's provision was strong at the previous inspection and it remains so.
- The community-based provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is located in centres where strong community links lead to high recruitment of eligible learners. AEiG's managers and subcontractors have

devised popular courses that meet learners' needs well, based in venues that are accessible and welcoming to learners and their families. The courses are valued highly by the learners and their families. AEiG's programmes provided by one contractor, a college, use the college's good working relationships with employers to place learners in supported internships.

- Teachers plan and execute personalised learning programmes for adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well. As a result, the learners develop in confidence, dexterity, fitness and creativity. Learners participate in sessions with enthusiasm and confidence. Teachers encourage learners to evaluate their own progress and set themselves targets. For example, in a swimming lesson a learner was asked to time herself over a set distance and then set a new distance goal.
- Teachers use their thorough knowledge of learners' individual learning and support needs well in combination with a range of useful strategies to help learners process and recall information. For example, in a dance and fitness class the teacher used frequent changes of music and a range of visual resources to prompt learners to remember set routines.
- Learners are supported well in the classroom by parents, carers, volunteers and employed learning support assistants. Teachers have provided effective training for these groups so that they can best support learners. Teachers provide useful briefings before lessons, share learning goals and prepare written guidance that promotes learners' independent living skills well.
- Teaching staff and adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities work closely and collaboratively to set and record individual learning goals that are mostly specific and measurable; these enable learners to record and see their own progress. The learners are involved closely in negotiating these step-by-step personal goals and targets. For example, a quieter, less confident learner had agreed and achieved an initial target to develop the confidence to speak to other learners and was now working towards a new target of participating in a small group performance and delivering a spoken line.
- Teachers' assessment of the progress of adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in classes is good. They provide written and verbal feedback designed to encourage learners to improve, while recognising what has been achieved. However, written feedback is rarely other than highly positive and does not provide learners and their carers/support workers with sufficient detail about any aspects for improvement.
- The sixth line of enquiry reviewed whether the quality of teaching, learning and assessment had remained good or improved further since the previous inspection. The overall quality of teaching and learning across AEiG's other programmes remains good, but a few weaknesses still exist. AEiG's leaders and managers recognise what needs to be improved and are in the early stages of implementing an improvement strategy.
- Most teachers use varied teaching and learning techniques and a good range of resources well; these help learners make good progress in their development of new knowledge and skills. The large majority of learners are highly complimentary about their teachers' skills and knowledge, the quality of teaching

and how much they have learned.

- Learners in English classes develop their spoken and written skills well. In English lessons for speakers of other languages, learners collaborate closely on practical tasks, sharing ideas and information. In information and communication technology beginners' classes, teachers' individualised coaching is effective in supporting learners' step-by-step development of skills. Learners on singing courses work very well together, learning to sing in harmony using different rhythms and tempos.
- Most learners particularly value the learning sessions based in their local communities, including English and music classes. For many, the opportunity to get out of the house and socialise with others is an important benefit of attending classes.
- The large majority of teachers check learners' progress in lessons effectively through the skilled use of questions that reveal each learner's knowledge and understanding. Teachers' verbal feedback to learners is useful. In English courses, teachers' written feedback on assignments is constructive and helps learners identify how they can improve their work further.
- My final line of enquiry reviewed how well teachers always identify and record learners' personal learning goals. This weakness from the previous inspection remains. Teachers still do not identify and record learners' personal learning goals consistently well. As a result, teachers do not always measure accurately each learner's individual progress and achievement. However, inspectors identified examples of teachers' effective practice in setting learners challenging targets and goals in community-based singing programmes and in English. Even so, the effectiveness of teachers' assessment practice generally on non-accredited learning programmes is too variable.
- In a very small minority of programmes, the most able learners are not all making the progress of which they are capable. In such cases, teachers are not taking sufficient account of all these learners' starting points or previous educational experience to devise individualised learning programmes.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- managers' observation and evaluation of all classroom and apprentice assessment or review sessions focus closely on the impact of teaching on learning and that the outcomes of these observations are developmental
- all teachers on non-accredited learning programmes identify and record learners' personal learning goals consistently well so that learners' progress and achievement can be measured more accurately
- learning coordinators pay closer attention to evaluating and supporting teachers to improve their assessment practice in non-accredited learning
- AEiG's management information system is used to produce clear and reliable data on the achievement of all groups of learners

- teachers' written feedback to adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is appropriately developmental.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Crombie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

One of Her Majesty's inspectors and three Ofsted inspectors together with AEiG's head of adult education as nominee conducted the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements about learners' attainment of qualifications. Inspectors observed learning sessions. They used group and individual interviews to gather the views of learners; these views are reflected throughout the report. Inspectors met with AEiG's leaders, managers and teaching staff and the chair of governors. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.