

Inspection of Nottinghamshire County Council

Inspection dates: 6 to 9 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Nottinghamshire County Council's education provision forms part of Inspire Culture, Learning and Libraries, specifically known as Inspire Learning. Leaders provide a range of services on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 1,000 adult learners, 155 young learners and 32 learners with high needs.

Adults study a broad range of courses from entry level to level 3 that are either accredited or non-accredited. Courses are offered in key areas such as English, mathematics, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses, personal and social development, employability, arts and crafts, and well-being. Young learners and learners with high needs mostly study together. Leaders offer vocational courses in areas such as construction, health and social care or catering. Alternatively, learners can study a personal and social development curriculum to help them to return to education. Leaders offer courses in around 100 venues across Nottinghamshire, including community centres, libraries, schools and other premises.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Staff create a calm, welcoming and inclusive environment for learners across the many settings that classes are taught in. Learners work well together and treat each other and staff with respect. Adult learners particularly appreciate the relationships they develop with their peers as they support each other to succeed.

Young learners enjoy their studies and the small class sizes they study in. Learners develop substantial new subject knowledge and develop their personal skills and confidence so they can progress to further study or work. Most young learners benefit from completing relevant work placements.

Adult learners value and appreciate their courses. Tutors' supportive approach encourages learners, who are often nervous to take part in education, to feel confident to study. Adult learners develop their social skills and prepare for work or independent living effectively.

Teachers and support workers encourage learners with high needs to be active members of their communities. They help them to use local shops, parks, gyms and libraries. Learners benefit from these activities. They gain confidence and successfully develop their independent living skills. Leaders and managers work with several specialist local agencies to provide useful emotional support for learners with high needs.

Adult learners and learners with high needs attend their courses well. Many young learners have historically low attendance in education. Leaders, managers and staff place a strong focus on supporting learners to improve their attendance. They communicate well with parents and develop relevant support plans. However, despite these actions, young learners' attendance still needs to further improve.

Learners feel safe attending their courses and know who to ask for support. Young learners say that they feel safe due to the swipe-in and swipe-out systems at all their campuses. Adult learners appreciate that leaders consider their safety during the winter months and carefully choose their courses' locations.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and governors have a strong focus on widening participation. This clearly guides the courses and curriculum they offer. Staff listen very closely to the needs of the community and employers. Leaders use this information well to establish a clear purpose for their curriculums. Most young people, adults and learners with high needs achieve their qualifications, develop personally and are well prepared for their next steps because of their studies.

Leaders carefully select their subcontracted partners so that this provision meets their core objectives. Many courses provide learners, often with limited access to education, with better opportunities to do so.

Most teachers plan their curriculums logically. They consider the best order to teach topics so that they build learners' understanding effectively. For example, young learners on personal and social development courses first develop their resilience before moving on to employment skills. As a result, learners know different ways to stay composed in new stressful situations, such as attending an interview.

In a few cases, managers and teachers do not focus sufficiently on how they plan their curriculums. In these instances, teachers do not think carefully enough about the order in which they teach subjects, or they do not use learners' starting points to plan the curriculum suitably. For example, managers do not ensure that digital skills bootcamps are taught in a logical order. In ESOL, a few groups work towards the same targets, irrespective of learners' existing knowledge. This means that learners do not always make the progress they are capable of or can find the curriculum confusing.

Teachers integrate English and mathematics effectively into young learners' lessons. For example, health and social care learners complete daily care journals using complex technical language. They calculate the time required to travel to several service users' homes during a day at work. These activities support learners to develop their written English and mathematical skills well.

In taught sessions, most teachers design lessons and activities that interest learners and encourage them to contribute to lessons. For example, teachers of art classes for adults develop activities that first start with areas that interest learners and then gradually introduce more technical skills. As a result, learners develop their skills well and understand the key principles they need to consider in their pieces.

However, for a small minority of learners with high needs, teachers do not use their individual targets sufficiently well to plan lessons. In these instances, teachers do not break down targets well enough or they plan activities that are too easy. This slows down a few learners' progress.

In most cases, teachers use assessment effectively to check that learners understand what they are taught. They ask learners demanding questions and design suitable tests and activities that check that they can remember important information. However, a few teachers are less skilled in their use of assessment. They do not allow time for learners to answer questions or check their understanding. This means that learners do not always know enough about a subject before moving on.

Teachers and learning support assistants work well together to plan appropriate support for learners. Learning support assistants break learning down into small steps that learners can understand. As a result, learners who require support make as good or better progress than their peers.

Teachers support young learners to develop a broad awareness of the risks of extremism and radicalisation. These topics are mostly covered in learners' induction,

and teachers do not plan to routinely revisit these topics. As a result, learners are less aware of the specific risks posed in their local areas.

Leaders and managers are yet to ensure that all young learners develop a detailed enough understanding of healthy relationships and topics related to sexual harm. The level of information that learners receive varies too much across the campuses where they study.

Most learners receive appropriate careers information, advice and guidance. Guidance staff help learners to make decisions and plan where they want to get to. In a few cases, guidance for younger learners only focuses on the next course they need to complete. As a result, learners do not know enough about all the steps they need to take to progress to a certain job or career.

Teachers, managers and staff benefit from an effective annual programme of training. Managers' local team meetings complement this and provide staff with valuable opportunities to share practice and ideas. Teachers reflect on their own skills and consider different approaches to their teaching. Subcontractor partners also benefit from these development opportunities.

Leaders and managers use a range of well-considered approaches to evaluate the quality of learners' experiences and education. They complete an accurate self-assessment, produce suitable improvement plans and review the quality of teaching effectively. These processes help leaders to identify where they need to improve and, in most areas, this happens. However, in a few cases, leaders are not quick enough to bring about the changes they identify. For example, a few teachers continue to need to improve their use of learners' starting points, despite managers' actions to improve this.

Leaders' quality assurance arrangements for subcontracted provision are effective. Managers undertake a range of useful activities that include frequent meetings, contract reviews and assurance visits. Leaders use these processes to closely monitor that the standards of education are good. Subcontractor partners benefit from attending a good-practice forum. This provides useful opportunities to share ideas and learn from each other, which they rightly value.

Governors have the relevant experience and skills they need to undertake their roles. The learning and skills committee, which forms part of a broader governance structure, oversees curriculum, safeguarding, quality and standards effectively. Governors receive appropriate information about the progress that leaders make with their actions for improvement. However, governors are less clear about the progress that leaders make in completing these actions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders understand their roles and responsibilities for safeguarding. The designated safeguarding lead, their deputies and staff undertake appropriate training. Staff receive helpful guidance so they can deal with and make any referrals.

Where concerns arise about a learner, staff record these carefully and take appropriate action. Staff liaise appropriately with external organisations to ensure that learners receive any help that they need.

Leaders evaluate their approaches to safeguarding through a useful monitoring group. They review cases and identify themes, and managers make any changes or share any learning they need to.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Staff should continue to support young learners to improve their attendance so that they can make even better progress.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that all teachers plan their curriculums effectively and take account of learners' starting points, the targets for learners with high needs, and effective sequencing.
- Teachers should develop their use of assessment so that they do not move on too quickly before checking that learners have understood topics.
- Leaders should ensure that all learners benefit from receiving the same level of information about local risks and healthy relationships.

Provider details

Unique reference number	53674
Address	Eastbourne House Station Road Sutton-in-Ashfield Nottinghamshire NG17 5JA
Contact number	0115 977 2875
Website	www.inspireculture.org.uk
CEO	Peter Gaw
Provider type	Community learning and skills – local authority
Dates of previous inspection	16 to 19 October 2017
Main subcontractors	Academy Transformation Trust Creative Paths Get Wise Green Scene Harley Foundation Life Education Centre East Midlands NG SHE Community Interest Company Reach Learning Disability Workers' Educational Association

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of learning, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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