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17 July 2018

Miss Sue Craggs
Head of Adult Education
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42–43 Queen Square
Camden
London
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Dear Miss Craggs

Short inspection of The Mary Ward Centre (AE Centre)

Following the short inspection on 27 and 28 June 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 February 2015.

This provider continues to be good.

Since your previous inspection, leaders and managers at the centre have worked effectively to ensure that students continue to enjoy a good standard of education. Staff are strongly committed to maintain the quality of the programmes. They ensure that the curriculum meets the diverse needs of individuals who seek to develop their skills to enhance their employment prospects or improve the quality of their life. Staff have created an environment in which students enjoy their lessons and participate in class activities. Teachers create an industrious and harmonious working atmosphere in which students thrive.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have worked closely with staff to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders and managers place a strong focus on working with a range of partners to provide innovative and engaging learning. The centre is a very welcoming and inclusive place to study. Students work collaboratively in an environment of tolerance and mutual respect. Leaders and governors have a good overview of the quality of the provision.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have maintained effective safeguarding policies and procedures since the previous inspection to help ensure the safety and well-being of students. Leaders and managers have created a strong culture in which staff recognise that any learner is potentially vulnerable at different times in her or his life. Staff receive training and continuing professional development which ensure that they have a

good understanding of how to keep students safe and what to do should they have concerns about the welfare of a learner. Students and staff know to whom they should go when they have concerns about their own or others' safety. Students feel safe and know how to stay safe online.

Leaders and managers have implemented the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty well. Staff are trained to know and identify if students are at risk of radicalisation and are familiar with the referral process. Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe from those who have radical and/or extremist views.

In the event of any safeguarding concerns, staff provide suitable support to students and maintain accurate records of any issues. Leaders' and managers' actions demonstrate a commitment to protecting students and ensuring their safety.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and managers have a clear strategic focus to meet the skills needs of London-based students. They have started courses for students who are in most need of the skills to contribute to, and benefit from, the economic advantages of living and working in London. These include short courses in English for speakers of other languages, business and marketing, project management and setting up social enterprise projects.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have maintained the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications, which is high. The proportion of students achieving qualifications in 2017/18 continues to be high. The proportion of students who complete community learning courses, which make up the great majority of the provision, remains high. The majority of learners who successfully complete qualifications and continue studying do so at a higher level.
- Trustees have a good overview of the quality of provision. They are aware of its strengths and weaknesses and the challenges that they face. They have a good understanding of what leaders and managers need to do to improve the provision. Trustees provide an effective challenge to leaders and managers. For example, they take part in the moderation of the provider's evaluation of the quality of provision and hold leaders and managers to account.
- Leaders and managers have established a quality assurance group to continue to improve teaching, learning and assessment. Managers plan appropriate training for teachers, but their processes to help support teachers to improve who they identify as underperforming are not effective enough.
- Teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) during lessons when it is appropriate to enhance students' understanding of a topic. For example, in art lessons, teachers use computer images to illustrate ways in which artists experiment with colour. In creative writing and philosophy lessons, students routinely develop their word processing skills by producing text for the rest of the group as the basis for discussion. This allows students to develop their skills and confidence using ICT.

- Teachers are effective in developing students' mathematical skills in their lessons. In practical subjects, such as clothes making, jewellery making and experimental sculpture, teachers develop students' estimating and measuring skills well. Because of this, students become more confident in using their newly acquired mathematical skills to adapt a standard pattern to create garments to non-standard body shapes and when designing and making artefacts.
- Staff use very well-considered arrangements to find out what students can and cannot do prior to the start of their course. They look carefully at each student's experience, prior learning and qualifications to place them on courses that best suit their learning and career goals. Staff give students comprehensive information about what to expect on their course so that students are well prepared and know what they need to commit to. As a result, most students stay on their course.
- On the majority of non-accredited courses, teachers make good use at the start of the course of the information that students provide about their prior knowledge and experience. They use this to plan lessons effectively to meet students' needs. In lessons where this is most effective, teachers provide challenging work for students, whether they are at beginner, intermediate or advanced level. Consequently, the work of many students in these practical lessons shows their increasing confidence in experimenting and trying new techniques.
- On a minority of non-accredited courses, staff do not identify precisely enough students' aspirations and intended outcomes at the start of the course. This makes it difficult for teachers and students to track the progress that students have made.
- Staff provide students with highly effective careers advice and guidance. A high proportion of students enrol on courses in order to make a career change. Students receive the necessary guidance to achieve their new career aims in sectors such as counselling and creative arts.
- Teachers on non-accredited and accredited courses prepare students well for employment. For example, teachers provide information about how students could print their graphics in a cost-effective way and how they could reproduce artefacts for sale while considering the constraints of time and cost when working as a sole trader. On accredited courses, students develop a good understanding of how to apply their learning to specific work environments. For example, in a mentoring awards class, students learned how to maintain professional boundaries when establishing a peer-mentoring scheme in a drug and alcohol dependency unit.
- Teachers focus closely and effectively on making clear to students how British values relate to their lives and those of their peers and neighbours. For example, teachers take students to parliament square and the houses of parliament to discover democracy in action, and to the supreme court of justice to observe trial by peers. Teachers are confident to help further students' views, through class discussion, on issues such as the impact of immigration on local communities. They also skilfully use resources in lessons to promote tolerance, equality and diversity.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they make better use of their findings from observations of teaching, learning and assessment to improve teachers' skills and share existing good practice
- they provide teachers with development plans, including actions to improve their teaching practice
- teachers' targets for students at the start of a course are sufficiently precise so that teachers and students can monitor the progress that students make.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Lambert
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors visited the provider for two days. The head of adult education, as nominee, assisted inspectors. Inspectors met with senior leaders and managers, as well as with a number of teachers. Inspectors visited several centres in London and met with learners. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment, and reviewed lesson planning documentation and learners' work. They reviewed policies and documents, including those related to self-assessment, quality improvement, performance management, and safeguarding. They also considered the views of learners and employers.