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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Alexis Keir
Director
Elfrida Rathbone Camden – Leighton Education Project
7 Dowdney Close
London
NW1 2BP

Dear Mr Keir

Short inspection of Elfrida Rathbone Camden (ERC) – Leighton Education Project

Following the short inspection on 9 March 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 November 2010.

This provider continues to be good.

Trustees, managers, staff and volunteers have maintained good-quality provision for learners for whom they receive high needs funding. Learners continue to develop good essential skills for independent living and increased employment prospects. The provision has grown successfully since the last inspection and the Leighton Education Project now offers a two-year personal development study programme and a one-year employability programme. The total number of learners remains small at 19 to ensure that they receive personalised approaches and support when required.

Trustees and ERC's director restructured the management and staffing appropriately to meet the needs of learners on the Leighton project and other projects run by ERC. Managers have made improvements to the premises following suggestions by learners, and staff have sufficient open-plan office space to be able to work closely as a team. The curriculum continues to develop and improve to meet the needs of learners as well as the government's requirements for study programmes.

Managers have successfully made the improvements to areas identified at the last inspection. The self-assessment report is written well and provides a good and accurate summary of the current strengths and areas for development. Managers carefully review the impact of actions taken each year and set clear priorities for the current year, which are understood well by staff and trustees.

Safeguarding is effective.

Trustees, leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and are a key priority for their learners. Managers followed up a recent incident, which staff managed well and recorded in detail, by calling a multi-agency team meeting with the local authority social care team, parents and a psychologist to agree appropriate actions. Managers also put in place appropriate support and supervision for staff and learners involved in the incident. Trustees and managers have used their experience of this incident well to review and improve their policies and procedures. Managers recognise the need to increase management oversight of minor welfare concerns and behavioural issues and any trends that may indicate wider-ranging problems.

Managers have made reasonable progress in complying with the 'Prevent' duty guidance. They have prepared a risk assessment and action plan, and awareness training for staff is almost complete. The information technology policies and systems have been reviewed and appropriate firewalls are in place. Staff are working with learners so that they know how to protect themselves.

Staff assess risks carefully in work experience placements for health and safety and safeguarding, although they do not yet include consideration of the 'Prevent' duty in their assessments. Leighton Education Project staff accompany many learners during work experience placements to ensure that they are safe. Learners learn safe working practices and appropriate food hygiene in cooking lessons.

Inspection findings

- An independent review of the Leighton Education Project in 2013 helped leaders and managers improve the programmes offered. They added discrete English, mathematics and information technology sessions to the personal development programme. Managers made good use of their experience of running a 'skill-up-for-work' project to design and develop a one-year employability programme with greater focus on work skills, communications and confidence.
- Managers are constantly improving and developing the curriculum. Sessions on British values include the election of learners to take on specific roles and responsibilities. Elected learners meet quarterly with trustees. Staff use an employer's human resources personnel to deliver a session on writing CVs and interview skills. Other initiatives include learners running their own café on-site once each week and a trial with the local authority to develop an electronic CV with video clips to demonstrate learners' skills.
- Well-established community and partnership arrangements continue to be a particular strength for the Leighton Education Project. Learners benefit from excellent access to other Elfrida Rathbone projects; in particular, they take part in volunteering projects in the local community and in the Young People for Inclusion activities.
- Learners take part in a wide range of activities and experiences with partner organisations, which enhance their skills development and increase their confidence. Last year, a group of learners helped prepare a window display

for a large high-street department store. A group of learners were involved in delivering a disability awareness workshop in the City of London.

- Managers have established particularly good partnerships with a wide range of employers who provide learners with supportive work experience opportunities. An international engineering and construction company found their own staff benefited from viewing issues from a different perspective, while the learner developed new skills and confidence.
- Learners ably reflect on the targets set each week and recognise the progress they make. Learners make good links between targets set in work skills sessions and their work experience placements, for example by discussing a difficulty in being punctual on work experience and how to overcome this. Learners use the feedback and reviews from their placement well to build on their strengths and tackle areas in need of development.
- Where necessary, learners benefit from good one-to-one support when attending work experience. A placement provider visited was confident in working with learners with a range of different needs and recognised the value of work experience for the learner and for the business. The supervisor was very positive about the learners' improvements in social skills, confidence and appropriate behaviour.
- Initial assessments are effective in identifying learners' English and mathematics skills, their strengths and areas for development. Staff teach discrete English and mathematics lessons and plans are in place for learners to complete accredited qualifications. However, in these discrete lessons, there is an over-reliance on photocopied worksheets which are rather childish and not consistently suitable for young adults. Teachers mark work accurately but feedback is often generic, such as 'well done', and does not focus on what learners still need to develop.
- Teachers promote English particularly well in subject lessons. They introduce and explain technical and vocational language in the context of the subject; for example, during a cookery lesson, the word 'gratin' was explained and learners clearly understood the process for making a gratin and where the word originated. Useful pictorial prompts and clues accompanied written information displayed around the classroom to ensure that learners with less-well-developed literacy skills understood the task in hand.
- Staff promote mathematics equally well, for example by learners calculating the weight and quantity of ingredients needed, budgeting for the activity and calculating cost when shopping for a cookery class. On a visit to a work experience placement, the learner demonstrated her developing skills in mathematics, carefully matching, sorting and classifying colours of garments for display.
- At the end of 2014/15, all learners made a positive progression onto further education and training programmes either with the Leighton Education Project or with other colleges or specialist programmes. Currently, too few learners progress into supported or paid employment, or volunteering. Two learners are expected to progress into volunteering roles later this year. Staff do not record aims and objectives relating to progression to paid employment or volunteering clearly enough in learners' learning plans and targets.

- Managers recognised that the recording and monitoring of learners' progression had been weak and improved the record keeping in July 2015. Staff followed up learners' progression in September 2015 and were able to provide additional support, for example, for a learner whose supported internship had fallen through, staff managed to find her a suitable course at college. Managers have designed a more robust system for use in the current year.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the management oversight of minor welfare and behavioural issues and ensure the 'Prevent' action plan is fully implemented
- learners' long-term aims and objectives are more explicitly stated so that it is clear how their termly targets relate to the development of skills needed for the next stage in their lives
- the materials used in discrete English and mathematics lessons are age-appropriate and more varied
- feedback to learners on marked work is sufficiently developmental to help learners improve
- the new system for recording and monitoring learners' progression is fully implemented.

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

Joy Montgomery
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors conducted this short inspection in one day with assistance from the director and the learning and participation programme manager. We spoke with ERC staff, work-experience staff and learners. We observed training sessions, scrutinised learners' files and reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence relating to the programmes, safeguarding and improvements.