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Mr Hugh Hennebry
Chair of Board
Adult College for Rural East Sussex
c/o Uckfield Community Technology College
Downsview Crescent
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Dear Mr Hennebry

Short inspection of Adult College for Rural East Sussex (ACRES)

Following the short inspection on 21 and 22 November 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 good in May 2014.

This provider continues to be good.

Leaders and managers have continued to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that students make good progress with their qualifications and/or their personal learning goals. Students value their learning highly and use what they learn to help them get jobs, improve their health and well-being and reduce social isolation.

Managers have used local market intelligence very well to offer relevant courses in areas of greatest need. Course cancellations have reduced as a result and the number of students enrolling on courses continues to increase.

A very high proportion of students on courses that do not lead to qualifications achieve their personal learning goals and move on to higher-level courses. A high proportion of students on courses that lead to qualifications achieve these and they improve the quality of their lives as a result. For example, students who do not have English as their first language are now able to help their children with homework. They are also better able to ask their child's school teachers relevant questions about their progress after taking English language qualifications.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and managers at ACRES complete appropriate safeguarding background checks on new staff. New and existing staff receive effective training in safeguarding. As a result, they can confidently raise potential safeguarding concerns

with the designated lead manager for safeguarding. Such early intervention ensures that these cases do not escalate, by supporting the student concerned or referring them to external agencies for help or guidance. The designated safeguarding manager keeps full records of safeguarding concerns.

Tutors make sure that students learn to work and/or operate safely, particularly on courses that include practical work or physical activity. For example, senior citizens on keep-fit courses learn to warm up sufficiently during the early stages of the session to prevent muscle strain or injury.

Students feel safe while they are on ACRES courses, particularly in the wide range of school and community learning venues. Students know who to talk to about safety or well-being concerns. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- Students develop good practical and technical skills because of good teaching in most subjects. For example, students on arts and crafts courses produce high-quality artwork and clothes. Students on languages courses develop their spoken and written skills well because of tutors' high expectations.
- Students exemplify British values in their behaviours and attitudes to learning. They respect each other's opinions and value the different skills and experiences they each bring to learning. They treat their tutors with respect and they arrive at lessons well prepared and ready to learn.
- Managers use data about recruitment to courses very well to make sure that the courses they offer are relevant to the students in the local area. They have developed sophisticated electronic systems to monitor student recruitment patterns and the cost effectiveness of offering courses in different areas. They have not yet linked the data on students' achievement and retention on courses to evaluate the full effectiveness of the provision.
- Tutors on courses for which it is appropriate use a wide range of resources, especially online resources, very effectively to help students continue learning outside of lessons. ACRES' virtual learning environment (VLE) contains much relevant information for languages courses and links to instructional videos for subjects such as yoga. Students use these frequently. Arts and crafts tutors and students use the VLE well to display and critique their work.
- A minority of tutors are not yet skilled at checking what students have learned or how much progress they have made in lessons. They also lack skills to check whether students are developing new skills or knowledge or achieving their personal learning goals. They use a narrow range of methods to check students' learning, and so cannot plan further learning effectively. As a result, students, particularly the most able, do not make the progress they should.
- In a minority of cases, tutors are not setting and agreeing challenging personal learning goals or targets with students. They also do not review students' progress in achieving these goals or targets. As a result, students do not always

know how much progress they have made and the most able students do not always make rapid progress.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should make sure that:

- tutors improve their skills in setting personal learning goals with students, so that students can make the full progress of which they are capable, both towards their qualifications and in developing new skills or lifestyle improvements
- tutors learn to check the progress that students make in lessons more effectively, so that they can plan further learning that students, especially the most able, find stimulating and motivating
- managers evaluate the effectiveness of courses in meeting local skills needs through consideration of all the information available to them, including data on students' achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Pemble
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors carried out the inspection. The adult learning manager assisted us, as nominee. We visited four main sites and several community venues to observe teaching, learning and assessments and to look at students' work. We met with students, the chair of the board, senior leaders, managers and tutors. We reviewed key documents including the college's most recent self-assessment report, and documents related to safeguarding. We also analysed data on the performance of students currently on courses and considered the views of students, staff and leaders.