

# Oakmere Community College

Independent learning provider

**Inspection dates**

8–11 December 2015

**Overall effectiveness****Inadequate**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for learners	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings

### This is an inadequate provider

- The proportion of learners who successfully complete their study programmes and courses in English and mathematics is too low.
- Too few learners progress to further studies, employment or training.
- Many learners do not attend their lessons regularly or on time; as a result they do not learn well enough.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate; too many lessons have significant weaknesses.
- Not all tutors have high expectations for learners and they do not plan lessons well enough to extend individual learners' knowledge and skills sufficiently.
- Leaders and managers have not fully implemented the requirements of study programmes; as a result too few learners benefit from well-planned work experience.
- Leaders and managers do not use information and data well enough to manage, monitor and improve the performance of learners
- Members of the board of trustees, leaders and managers have failed to sustain or improve the quality of provision since the last inspection.
- Leaders and managers have not developed and implemented an effective quality improvement system.
- The self-assessment report is inaccurate and has overestimated the quality of all aspects of the provision.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Staff successfully recruit many learners who have multiple barriers to education and employment.
- Staff support learners' personal and emotional needs well.

# Full report

## Information about the provider

- Oakmere Community College (Oakmere), a private company and registered charity set up in 1981 to provide training in the Merseyside area, joined Local Solutions group as a separate legal entity at the beginning of July 2015. Oakmere operates from its head office and the training centre in Walton, Liverpool.
- Oakmere recruits around 300 learners each year on 16–19 study programmes. Most learners are enrolled on these courses at level 1 and level 2. It has three subcontractors, of which two offer level 3 study programmes. The large majority of learners have low prior attainment, including in English and mathematics. A significant minority of learners have multiple barriers to education and employment.
- Oakmere's board of trustees has four members, three of whom are also members of the board of trustees of Local Solutions.

## What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of learners who complete their study programmes successfully by monitoring their progress and intervening rapidly when they do not achieve well.
- Improve learners' attendance and punctuality by ensuring tutors have high expectations of learners and challenge them for poor punctuality and irregular attendance.
- Ensure leaders and managers implement fully all aspects of learners' study programmes by developing effective arrangements for each learner to benefit from suitable well-structured work experience and to develop the skills which employers require.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring all tutors use information on learners' starting points, including their barriers to learning, to plan learning activities which stretch their knowledge and enable them to produce high standards of written and practical work.
- Ensure all tutors routinely develop learners' skills in English and mathematics by providing them with clear and accurate feedback on their work.
- Improve significantly the quality improvement arrangements by evaluating teaching, learning and assessment accurately and swiftly implementing actions to raise standards.
- Ensure the self-assessment process leads to an accurate evaluation of the quality of provision to enable all staff including trustees, leaders and managers to take swift improvement actions.
- Ensure the board of trustees and leaders set clear and ambitious targets for all aspects of learners' outcomes and the quality of provision and hold individuals to account for delivering them.
- Ensure leaders and managers develop effective systems to collect suitable data and information about all aspects of the provision and use these well to bring about improvements.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management

is inadequate

- Leaders and managers have failed to manage successfully the transition to study programmes from foundation learning programmes which they offered at the last inspection. They do not ensure that the full requirements of study programmes are met for all learners; for example, not all learners benefit from good work experience.
- Leaders do not ensure all staff have high expectations and ambition for learners. They set only a few performance targets against which managers monitor the performance of the provision, teams and individuals and implement improvements. Managers' operational plans contain conflicting, and on occasions, outdated performance targets.
- Leaders and managers do not have a good range of robust and reliable data to manage performance, monitor success or bring about improvement across the college. They do not use data to analyse trends or to measure the impact of activities such as learner support on learners' progress.
- Managers have not developed effective arrangements to monitor learners' attendance and punctuality, which have been low for the last two years. Managers do not have useful, accurate and timely reports to identify learners who are at risk of slow progress promptly. As a result they are unable to implement the necessary interventions to bring about improvement.
- Managers have not developed and implemented the provision well enough to ensure benefits to learners and local employers. Consequently, too few learners progress to suitable work or further studies at the end of their programmes. Leaders have not developed sufficient links with employers to ensure all learners benefit from work experience.
- Arrangements to improve staff performance and to plan effective professional development are inadequate. A significant number of staff do not have the skills and knowledge to provide a high standard of teaching and learning.
- Oakmere's strategy to ensure a high standard of teaching in English and mathematics lacks detail and too few learners achieve their qualifications. Managers have recently entered into a subcontracting arrangement to provide specialist support for the more-able and least-able learners, for example learners who need to study for GCSEs in English and mathematics. However, this arrangement is too recent for full evaluation.
- Quality improvement arrangements, including the observation of teaching and learning, are weak. They have not been effective in successfully eradicating the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Leaders and managers have not developed a robust self-assessment process to evaluate accurately the impact of teaching, resulting in a significant over-estimation of the quality of all aspects of the provision.
- Management of subcontractors' performance is weak. Regular meetings to check the quality of subcontracted provision or to ensure that subcontractors meet the needs of learners on the study programme do not take place.
- The college has a culture of inclusivity and fair treatment for learners. However, managers have not ensured that tutors are confident and skilful in equipping learners to further their understanding of fair treatment. Managers have not developed a clear strategy or an action plan to ensure tutors prepare learners to work and live successfully in Britain. Leaders and managers do not always use data effectively to monitor the performance of different groups of learners, including the vulnerable learners who are recruited to the programmes – for example learners who are homeless.
- Leaders and managers place a strong focus on engaging and recruiting learners who are hardest to reach, reflecting Oakmere College's mission statement. Effective partnership working with organisations such as the local authority, social services and Merseyside police has been effective in recruiting many learners at risk of social or economic exclusion.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - Trustees have not challenged leaders effectively to ensure weaknesses identified at the last inspection were improved.
  - Trustees have not focused sufficiently on learners' success, or to ensure that they receive high-quality learning.
  - Trustees have failed to ensure that leaders and managers have clear, aspirational targets against which they can monitor performance and provide timely intervention and support.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
  - Staff work with external agencies well to safeguard the welfare of all learners.

- Staff have completed appropriate safeguarding training and reporting arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Oakmere provides an environment where learners feel safe.
- The majority of staff have recently completed training on how to identify extremism and radicalisation and how to protect learners. However, they are yet to use this information in their work with learners.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate**

- Too many learners do not benefit from a well-planned individual study programme. Too few gain from well-structured, well-planned and suitable work experience which meets their individual needs and aspirations. Learners in catering courses gain good experience as a result of working in the on-site conference centre and community-based projects.
- Tutors do not use information about learners' starting points and barriers to their learning well to plan their activities in lessons. As a result, teaching, learning and assessment do not meet individual learners' needs and broaden their knowledge and skills. Too often they plan for learners with the lowest prior attainment, leaving the more-able learners with little to gain from lessons.
- The quality of lessons in subcontractors is generally better than that in the college. For example, learners in sports and building services develop good skills and progress well towards their chosen careers.
- Not all tutors are skilful in using an effective range of teaching and learning techniques to help learners progress. In a practical workshop lesson the tutor set learners a task which did not challenge them sufficiently as they had already mastered the skill. In an employability lesson, learners completed a simple task very quickly and then went on to talk about other topics unrelated to the lesson without being challenged.
- Tutors do not use questioning techniques well enough to extend learners' understanding, develop their in-depth knowledge or their understanding of good industrial practice. Too many tutors do not challenge learners' superficial response to open questions. In one motor vehicle session, the tutor did not use effective questioning technique to develop learners' understanding of good industrial practice. As a result learners do not develop a good standard of work.
- Not all tutors consistently provide useful and constructive feedback on learners' work and how to improve. In the better lessons, tutors provide useful advice to learners on how to improve; for example, by guiding them to produce good revision notes. However, too often the feedback which tutors provide focuses on meeting minimum standards rather than enabling learners to produce a high standard of work.
- Tutors do not plan to develop learners' English and mathematics skills well. In the functional skills and GCSE lessons, although tutors do coach learners to help to improve skills in the use of English and mathematics, it is not to the standard to successfully pass tests. Too often tutors do not identify and feed back about spelling and punctuation errors in learners' work. Not all tutors take enough care to use English well in their handouts and presentations; too many teaching material includes grammatical or spelling errors.
- The vast majority of learners do not benefit from a good-quality learning environment. The quality and tidiness of classrooms and workshops are not always good; too many are uninspiring. This affects learners' attitudes to learning and hinders the development of good study skills and attitudes to work and learning.
- Despite recent training, tutors do not develop learners' understanding of how they can influence decision-making through the democratic processes and their understanding about the freedom to choose and hold different faiths and views. Tutors do not develop learners' knowledge sufficiently about the risk of extremism and radicalisation.
- Tutors offer good welfare support for learners that helps them overcome personal difficulties in their everyday lives. This includes supporting learners when they experience difficulties or conflict at home.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate**

- Too many learners do not attend lessons regularly or on time. As a result, they learn little and do not achieve their potential. This poor pattern of attendance and punctuality interrupts the learning of those who do attend regularly and slows their progress.
- Staff do not advise and guide learners well to achieve their potential fully. Too many learners are enrolled

on study programmes at the same level as, or one level below, their prior attainment. A significant minority of learners return to take a qualification at the same level in a different vocational area and do not progress to higher-level qualifications. Many do not have a realistic or clear plan for their future careers.

- Most learners, including the more able and self-confident do not have a well-structured, planned and meaningful work experience as part of their study programme. Consequently, they fail to develop the skills required for progression to their next steps.
- Most learners take part in an extensive range of activities to develop their personal skills, such as taking part in sports activities or visiting theme parks. However, they do not benefit from these activities sufficiently because tutors do not plan, explain and review the skills which learners need to develop through these activities.
- Learners do not develop their skills in applying English and mathematics much beyond their starting points. This is because tutors in lessons, especially in vocational lessons, do not plan, develop and include activities to ensure learners can practise their use of English and mathematics.
- Learners have a good understanding of the importance of treating individuals fairly and accepting different preferences. However, tutors have not developed sufficiently learners' understanding of democracy, the rule of law, individual freedom, and respect for, and tolerance of, those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Learners' behaviour is good and they demonstrate high levels of respect for their peers and tutors. They say they feel safe at the college. Tutors and learning mentors promote well learners' understanding about different forms of bullying and take swift actions when issues arise.

## **Outcomes for learners**

## **are inadequate**

- The proportion of learners aged 16 to 19 on study programmes who successfully achieve their qualifications is low. This proportion is significantly lower than other providers, with less than half of learners achieving their qualification in the last year.
- Too few learners achieve their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics at level 1 and level 2. The number of learners who passed these qualifications successfully was low in 2013/14, and in 2014/15 did not improve sufficiently. Only a very small minority are studying for GCSEs in English and mathematics.
- Despite attracting a significant number of learners who are homeless, care leavers, young offenders or substance misusers, managers do not have an adequate system to monitor the progress and outcomes for different groups of learners.
- The number of learners who progress successfully to further study, employment or training is too low. Only a minority have progressed in the last two years.
- Overall, the standard of learners' written, practical work and skills requires improvement. A small minority of learners who study catering courses develop good skills.

## Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	330
Principal	Julie Mousley-Dean
Website address	<a href="http://www.oakmere.net/">http://www.oakmere.net/</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	88	0	47	0	27	0	0	0
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14-16	0							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	■ Coaching Connexions Limited							
	■ Hybrid Technical services							
	■ The Jamie Carragher Sports & Learning Academy							

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Shahram Safavi, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Judith Hamer	Ofsted Inspector
Patrick McKinley	Ofsted Inspector
Elaine Price	Ofsted Inspector
Elaine Smith	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the Principal, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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