

Inspection of Rutland County Council

Inspection dates:

18 to 20 March 2025

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Information about this provider

Rutland County Council provides adult learning courses through its Adult Learning and Skills Service. Leaders offer courses in tailored community learning and accredited adult learning.

All learners are aged 19 and over, with most aged 55 and over.

Most learners study community-based courses in arts, language or 'first steps' English and mathematics. There were 160 learners on these courses.

A smaller number of learners study adult learning courses in functional skills English and mathematics, English for speakers of other languages and counselling. There were 49 learners on these courses.

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

Many learners attend their courses to reduce feelings of isolation and improve their sense of purpose. They experience an inclusive, warm and welcoming environment. Learners know their peers well and treat each other with consideration and respect.

Well-qualified and experienced tutors help learners grow in confidence and learn new skills. Tutors provide a lot of support and help learners to believe in their ability to achieve, such as developing their English and mathematical skills or trying out new techniques in watercolour classes.

Too many learners complete the same course several times or continue to attend courses purely as a recreational hobby. Learners are keen to continue to attend classes even when there is no longer a well-defined purpose for them to do so. Most learners expect to continue to attend their current course in the future and have no plans to progress beyond this.

Learners feel safe. They feel this way because staff are caring and supportive. Most learners have a reasonable awareness of safeguarding and what it means. They know who to go to if they have concerns and are confident that any concerns will be acted on.

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

Leaders do not make sure that courses align consistently and closely with learners' goals. Retired adults who initially attend art courses to improve their well-being because of loneliness continue to attend for many years. Leaders offer 'first steps' English and mathematics courses to prepare learners to progress onto functional skills courses, but this aspiration is beyond most learners' ability. Consequently, most learners repeat the same course for several years without progression to further study. However, accredited functional skills English and mathematics courses are very suitably aligned with learners' goals and needs and provide them well with the required knowledge and skills.

Tutors plan and teach the subject content of most curriculums in a logical order. They take into account learners' vocational abilities. For example, watercolour painting tutors introduce novices to basic mixing techniques while more experienced learners experiment with more abstract concepts. However, on 'first steps' courses, learners all work towards the same individual goals, which do not take into account learners' differing ability levels.

Leaders and tutors pay close attention to learners' additional support needs so that learners who need support can participate in their lessons fully. Tutors make sensible adjustments, including using different coloured paper and providing extra time.

Tutors use their expertise well to clearly explain new material and set it in context for learners. Italian tutors help learners to expand their understanding of spoken

language as well as the cultural background of Italy. Art tutors give clear demonstrations, for example how to mix watercolours to achieve different hues.

Most tutors use a range of techniques effectively such as questioning, quizzes and tasks to check learners' understanding. Mathematics tutors ask learners to explain their calculations. Tutors and learners jointly explore any errors so learners know where they went wrong and how to improve their work. Art tutors set carefully planned tasks so learners can independently practise what they have been shown.

Leaders and tutors are mindful of learners' welfare. They promote services such as parenting hubs and talking therapies. Tutors provide appropriate information about fundamental British values and the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Many learners can explain what these are and why they are important. However, in a few instances, learners have limited recall of these topics.

Learners who seek work or further study benefit from appropriate advice. They meet individually with qualified advisers who show them how to search or apply for jobs, access volunteering roles or move on to further study.

Learners do not make swift enough progress towards their goals on tailored community courses. They have individual targets that relate solely to their courses' vocational aspect and not to personal goals such as improving confidence. As a result, leaders and tutors do not routinely evaluate learners' progress towards these personal goals. However, on art and language courses, learners develop their technical skills well. A small number of art learners are competent enough to start their own crafting businesses or exhibit at events.

On accredited functional skills courses, learners make much better progress. Around half of learners achieve English qualifications, with slightly fewer achieving in mathematics. Leaders have recently implemented sensible changes, including support arrangements, changed session times and initial assessments. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of these changes.

The adult learning leadership team members are relatively new in their respective roles. They acknowledge that the current course offer does not fully meet the needs of residents in their communities. Leaders are ambitious to make improvements and have conducted extensive stakeholder engagement, which they intend will inform the design of future courses.

The council's adult learning provision forms part of 'living well Rutland'. This is overseen by various senior-level boards and external steering groups. Leaders share appropriate updates with these boards. These include, for example, details about the current review of provision and wider stakeholder engagement work conducted to date.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Make sure all courses have a clearly defined purpose that is well aligned to learners' needs.
- Develop clear progression routes or appropriate signposting to other relevant activity from all courses.
- Improve oversight of learners' progress towards their intended primary goals so that learners make swifter progress.
- Use stakeholder engagement to implement planned changes to the course offer that better meet community needs.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54229
Address	Unit 16A Oakham Enterprise Park Oakham LE15 7TU
Contact number	01572 720985
Website	www.ralss.org.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Bernadette Caffrey
Provider type	Local authority
Date of previous inspection	23 to 24 April 2018
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the adult learning team leader, 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

Vicki Locke, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jackie Rossa	Ofsted Inspector
Emma Woods	His Majesty's Inspector

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