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Mr Greg Coyne
Director for Curriculum and Quality
Workers' Educational Association
4 Luke Street
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Dear Mr Coyne

Short inspection of Workers' Educational Association (WEA)

Following the short inspection on 29 and 30 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 WEA was judged to be good in December 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

You, your colleagues and volunteers continue to work effectively to ensure that a high proportion of students achieve their personal learning goals and course objectives. The majority of students, all of whom are adults, continue into volunteering, community work, further education and/or employment. Students report improved health and well-being, improved self-confidence and a richer, more rewarding life as a result of the time they have spent at WEA. Most students study on courses that do not lead to qualifications, for example in creative writing, arts and crafts, social history, philosophy and jewellery making. A small minority of students study English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

Students benefit from effective and appropriate advice on their choice of course. This enables most to be on a course that is suitable for them in terms of their starting points and aspirations. Students' attendance in lessons is good. Students show an enthusiasm for their learning that results in lively in-class discussions; they pay careful attention to completing the tasks that teachers set.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Senior managers ensure that each region has a designated lead manager for safeguarding; these managers work effectively to ensure that students are safe in the very wide-ranging learning locations that WEA uses. Managers' monitoring of safeguarding arrangements is

detailed. Ongoing monitoring of vulnerable students is highly effective in ensuring that they continue to be safe in centres and in their communities.

Training for staff, teachers and volunteers is thorough, ensuring that a culture of vigilance is maintained.

Most students have a good understanding of British values and how these relate to their everyday lives and work. Students understand well how to protect themselves and their families from the potential threats posed by those who hold radical and/or extremist views. They know how to alert the relevant authorities, or their teachers, should they have concerns for their peers or members of their own communities.

A very small minority of students have insufficient knowledge about how to keep themselves safe when working online. While many students develop a good understanding, a minority have a less secure understanding. In lessons, a small minority of teachers do not systematically check that students have these skills or establish the level of students' prior understanding.

Inspection findings

- Managers have effective systems for collecting information on students' next steps on completion of their courses. They use this information well to plan and enhance future courses. For example, managers have established well-designed routes into qualification-based learning that provide good opportunities for students to gain employment, volunteer within their own community or work towards entering higher education.
- Senior managers have a good oversight of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Their extensive quality measures give them a good understanding of the strengths and areas where improvement is required. Managers, when observing lessons, now focus more closely on learning, students' progress in lessons and their progress in achieving their learning goals over time. In their summaries of lesson observations, most managers more clearly identify good and better learning. However, in a minority of instances they focus too much on detailing students' completion of tasks and activities, rather than on the knowledge, skills and understanding students are gaining.
- Students develop good skills in English, and teachers are adept at developing students' technical language. Students gain confidence to present their work and their opinions. Teachers are careful to link learning to the skills employers and the local community require.
- Across the nine regions where WEA operates, teachers' enthusiasm and use of technology vary from highly effective to insufficient. Many teachers are confident in their own personal use of technology and use it well to enrich and enliven learning, for example in a sewing and dressmaking lesson where students promoted and sold their products on digital auction sites and took electronic payments successfully. Where teachers' own use of technology is insufficient, they often do not ensure that students routinely make effective use of available technology to aid or enhance their learning. Managers have ambitious plans to

enhance and extend learning through the use of digital technology. They provide well-considered staff development and use appropriate strategies to develop the skills of teachers who lack confidence and expertise.

- Not enough teachers focus closely enough on ensuring that students develop the mathematical skills they require to be successful in learning and life. In courses that do not lead to qualifications, teachers often do not make clear to students when they are using mathematics or develop students' mathematical strategies effectively. For example, they do not routinely expect students to calculate the amount of materials they will use to make arts and crafts, or when learning to make jewellery.
- Managers and teachers have worked hard to improve the proportion of students who achieve their English, mathematics and ESOL qualifications. In 2016/17 many more students were successful in their learning, although the proportion who achieved their qualification is not yet good.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- students' understanding of how to use the internet safely for research, accessing social media and for online shopping is secure
- teachers make use of available technology to extend and enhance learning systematically and frequently
- teachers develop students' mathematical skills effectively in lessons, and encourage students to take useful notes to aid their understanding of their subject
- a larger proportion of students on English, mathematics and ESOL courses achieve their qualification; managers and teachers need to monitor students' progress closely and intervene swiftly where students are at risk of not achieving.

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

Yours sincerely

Jules Steele
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors, supported by the director for curriculum and quality, carried out the inspection at short notice.

We visited learning venues across the country to observe learning and interview students, teachers, managers and volunteers. We used videoconferencing to interview managers, teachers and students, and to observe staff training and

development. We viewed key documents including managers' most recent self-assessment of performance, and documents related to safeguarding students.