

# Mitchell High School Community Learning Centre

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**Inspection date**

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**Inspection number**

316575

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

#### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- ICT for users
- Preparation for life and work

## Description of the provider

1. Mitchell High School (MHS) Community Learning Centre is part of Mitchell Business and Enterprise College in Stoke-on-Trent. MHS is integral to the school and shares the same working area with the college students. The young students access their learning at the same time as the adult learners access their **learndirect** courses and are often learning side by side.
2. Between August 2006 and the end of July 2007, there were 822 enrolments on MHS's **learndirect** courses. Some learners enrolled on more than one course. ICT training accounts for about 15% of the provision overall, while 85% is skills for life provision, comprising programmes in literacy and numeracy. At the time of the inspection, 341 learners were enrolled on courses all of whom studied at the MHS.
3. MHS is managed by the centre manager, supported by three tutors. The manager reports to the Director of Partnerships who in turn reports to a member of the senior management team of the college. The centre is open from 0830 to 1700, Monday to Friday. There is one main training room with seven computers and there are four small side rooms with a computer in each where learners can take tests. On wednesday afternoons and thursday mornings, the centre has three free crèche places for learners.
4. MHS attracts learners from around the City, but the majority come from the local area. The area is characterized by high unemployment, a very high single parent mix, families with low income and a population with relatively low levels of qualifications.
5. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the local areas of Bentilee and Townsend was 2% compared with 9.1% nationally. Three per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups. Unemployment in the area is 11.5% compared with the national rate of 5.8%.

## Summary of grades awarded

<b>Effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
<b>Achievement and standards</b>	<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
<b>Equality of opportunity</b>	<b>Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2</b>

## Sector subject area

<b>ICT for users</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Preparation for life and work</b>	<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>

## Overall judgement

### **Effectiveness of provision**

#### **Satisfactory: Grade 3**

6. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Leadership and management and preparation for life and work are satisfactory. Equality of opportunity and ICT for users are good. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory.

#### **Capacity to improve**

#### **Satisfactory: Grade 3**

7. The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements. MHS has analysed in detail the high withdrawal rate and put in place appropriate actions to reduce this. It regularly collects the views of learners and takes appropriate action to deal effectively with any concerns raised. Performance is closely monitored and required actions are included within the MHS's development plan.
8. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The report is inclusive and accurate and reflects the finding of inspectors. A number of weaknesses identified have already been dealt with and the centre continues to implement and monitor its action plan. Inspectors identified some additional areas for improvements, but the report and the process are satisfactory overall.

## Key strengths

- High success rates on ICT courses
- Well-resourced centre
- Good programme of additional support to promote learner achievement
- Well-supported learners
- Good partnership arrangements
- Highly inclusive programmes

## Key areas for improvement

- Low success rates on skills for life courses
- Not enough thoroughness in withdrawing inactive learners

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. Learners work is satisfactory. Learners use computers confidently and are able to progress with their course with minimum support. Most learners have not used a computer before and many do not have access to computers at home. They enjoy visiting the MHS and most attend regularly. Some learners make good progress towards employment and also to more advanced courses. Recently, 13 learners gained employment or started their own business, eight of them began an access to higher education course and five learners entered higher education.

Success rates overall in 2006/07 were low at 59.8%, below both the regional and national averages. The self-assessment report recognises that success rates in skills for life programmes are low. The success rates in ICT courses are high and above both the regional and national averages, however, ICT courses account for only 15% of the provision. The report also recognises that too many learners withdraw from their course before completion. Detailed analysis shows that about a third of these have withdrawn due to finding employment or undertaking other training.

### Quality of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

10. MHS is well-resourced and there are sufficient well-qualified staff to support learners. It is well placed to provide access to those on the local estates, particularly parents of students. There is adequate free parking for those with cars and three free places at the crèche for **learnirect** learners on wednesday mornings and thursday afternoons. MHS provides a particularly good environment to learn in. It is comfortable, well-lit and is situated in the same room as other computer users in the school. The atmosphere is relaxed and the equipment is of a high standard. There is also a good range of additional learning materials and this includes printed materials which learners without computers can take home to continue with independent learning. Four separate pods each equipped with a computer provide a useful area for learners undertaking tests. In addition to the workstations, there are seating areas with comfortable chairs and low tables where learners can relax and take a break.
11. Learners are well-supported. Tutors provide good advice and guidance, not just about appropriate courses but also in relation to careers. One tutor has a Level 3 NVQ in Information, advice and guidance; two tutors are currently working towards this qualification. The centre is integral with the **nextstep** centre. Individual coaching by tutors is good. They encourage learners to work independently but provide assistance and guidance where necessary. Individual tuition is effective and complements learners' courses. Support is particularly sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of learners. Staff have a good knowledge of their learners and understand their personal circumstances. Tutors often provide further support beyond that required for the qualification. One learner was helped to prepare a presentation for a job interview. Good partnership work enhances the support for learners. The 'Startup' group provide transport to and from MHS enabling learners who would not normally be able to do so. There is also a three-day motivational training programme which is held twice a year. This is

funded by the local authority and is aimed at learners who are least likely to complete their programme. Although learners who attended the programme found it useful, there is no data to identify how effective it is.

12. Learners' progress is appropriately monitored and notes maintained on the Ufi system. Tutors undertake an informal review of progress at the end of each session and discuss with learners what they need to do next and when they will attend. Individual learning plans contain sufficient information about learners aims and progress.
13. There is a good programme of additional support to promote learner achievement. MHS has a particularly strong focus on the needs of the community and the provision is an integral part of the schools community work. It aims to provide those in the local community with the skills they need to gain employment and be successful. Staff are very aware of the particular needs of the local community which are characterised by low skill levels and high unemployment. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging parents and carers of children at the school to engage in learning and act as role models for children. Students work in the same area as adults and benefit from seeing adults engaging in learning. The centre also has a strong focus on regeneration and the provision is well-integrated and complementary with other local initiatives and city-wide projects.

## Leadership and management

**Satisfactory: Grade 3**

### Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

14. Leadership and management of MHS are satisfactory. There is a clear strategy for which is driven by the leadership team and senior managers. MHS is a key part of the school's wider community work. Managers are aware of the strengths and areas for improvement and these are appropriately reflected in the school development plan and overseen by the leadership team. Staff performance is formally reviewed annually.
15. MHS has established good partnership arrangements and works closely with a wide range of local and city-wide support organisations including a local housing association, which refer learners and supports the work of MHS. It also works closely with a city-wide regeneration project which aims to help parents with work and training opportunities. Workers from the project provide transport for learners to and from the centre. Partner organisations are represented on the school governing body and contribute to the strategic thinking and direction of the MHS. The school is a **nextstep** centre allowing learners good access to careers advice and guidance. A high proportion of MHS learners are referred to them by their partners.
16. MHS has a clear health and safety policy which is well-implemented. Learners are made aware of the health and safety requirements of working at computer workstations and are encouraged to take regular breaks. Health and safety reminders are put on all computer screens. MHS is highly inclusive. It has a good strategy to widen participation through its partnership arrangements and successfully attracts a high proportion of learners who would not normally access education and training programmes.

17. MHS has a clear equal opportunities and diversity policy. This is displayed on the wall for learners along with clear statements on disability, the complaints procedure and other relevant policies. The learners' charter is given to all learners along with a useful learner information pack with relevant information. Access to the centre is good for those with restricted mobility. MHS is on the ground floor and is spacious with easy access for wheelchair users to easily move around. The centre has appropriate adaptive technology and this is used by some learners.
18. Quality assurance and improvement arrangements are satisfactory. The process of self-assessment is inclusive, accurate and satisfactory. Appropriate service level agreements have been established with key partners. There are procedures in place for most key processes and staff have begun to carry out peer observations to monitor compliance, however, MHS is not yet monitoring the effectiveness of these procedures. The observation of teaching and learning has recently been introduced. Some external observations have resulted in useful records and feedback to staff, but the internal observations do not sufficiently focus on the experiences of learners.
19. Arrangements to manage the withdrawal of learners are not applied with sufficient rigour. A high number of learners have not accessed their course for long periods of time, some for over 100 days. Although, MHS has an appropriate procedure for dealing with these learners, it is not always applied. After 14 days, staff attempt to contact learners and encourage them to return to their course, however, the records of contact are not always sufficient as a significant number of learners cannot be contacted and do not respond to telephone messages or letters. Too many of these learners continue to be on roll without accessing their course or contacting MHS.

## What learners like:

- Support and help from tutors
- Additional resources – ‘I like to be able to take the books home’
- ‘I can now help my son with his homework’
- There is no pressure’
- Opening times – ‘It fits in with my children being at school’

## What learners think could improve:

- Nothing identified

**ICT for users**

**Good: Grade 2**

**Strengths**

- High success rates
- Well-resourced centre
- Well-supported learners

**Areas for improvement**

- Not enough thoroughness in withdrawing inactive learners

**Preparation for life and work****Satisfactory: Grade 3****Strengths**

- Well-resourced centre
- Well-supported learners

**Areas for improvement**

- Low success rates
- Not enough thoroughness in withdrawing inactive learners

## Annex

**Learners' achievements**

2006/07	Enrolments	Counted for data	Success rate (%)	Withdrawal rate (%)
All sectors	822	728	59.8	21.2
ICT	109	81	69.1	23.5
Skills for life	713	647	58.6	20.9

**Equality and diversity**

2006/07	All Ethnic Groups	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese/Other	Mixed	Not Known	White
Enrolments	822	14	8	1	2	0	797
Completion rate (%)	79.2	81.8	42.9	0	0	0	79.8
Achievement rate (%)	74.2	66.7	100	0	0	0	74.2
Success rate (%)	59.8	54.5	42.9	0	0	0	60.3
Withdrawal rate (%)	21.2	18.2	57.1	100	100	0	20.5