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Ms Julie Kenrick
Head of Service Adult Learning
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
18 Haymarket Street
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Dear Ms Kenrick

Short inspection of Bury Metropolitan Borough Council Adult Learning Service

Following the short inspection on 24 and 25 November 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your provision was judged to be good in March 2010.

This provider continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education and training in the service since the previous inspection. Your provision is targeted well at meeting the needs those Bury residents facing the highest levels of disadvantage. The service's mission strongly supports the council's strategic objectives for improving health and well-being and economic prosperity in Bury.

At your previous inspection, inspectors commended you and your team on the strong commitment to ensuring a high quality of service, the promotion of equality and diversity through the range of provision and within the curriculum, and the strength of partnership working. You and your team have maintained these strengths. At the time of the last inspection, the standard of teaching and learning was generally good although a few sessions failed to meet the needs of all learners. With the exception of a few literacy and numeracy courses, success rates were generally high. You and your team have taken effective action to remove these weaknesses and further improve the quality of provision. The impact is clear: the quality of teaching and learning has continued to improve and is now consistently good or better, and success rates have continued to improve and are now high. Your

provision is carefully targeted to meet the needs of those residents facing the highest levels of disadvantage. Strong partnership working is key to achieving this.

Safeguarding is effective.

Arrangements for safeguarding are appropriate for the learners. Where applicable, staff have current Disclosure and Barring Service checks and the service adheres to safer recruitment principles. Staff use risk assessments well to identify, manage and minimise risk for learners, particularly for learners with disabilities and those who have special educational needs. All staff have been trained in safeguarding and this is refreshed annually. Nearly all staff have received Prevent training in radicalisation and extremism. Learners confirm that they feel safe.

Developing learners' understanding of a range of topics relating to safeguarding features strongly in lessons and learners' work, and consequently learners show a good understanding of safeguarding issues. For example, learners on Level 2 speaking, listening and communication functional skills courses research and deliver presentations on topics such as domestic violence among South Asian Muslim women, female genital mutilation, forced versus arranged marriage, internet safety and self-harm.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and managers have clear aspirations for the service to become outstanding and they set high expectations for both staff and learners. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to achieving these aspirations and expectations. Consequently, learners enjoy their courses and achieve well.
- Leaders, managers and staff are relentless in their pursuit of improvement. They rigorously analyse the reasons behind any underperformance and subsequent actions are effective in bringing about improvement. For example, concerted action for improvement increased the proportion of learners successfully achieving English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) qualifications from 78% in 2012/13 to 95% in 2014/15.
- Learners benefit from good or better teaching, learning and assessment. Staff carefully assess learners' needs and then use this information to plan relevant learning activities. This enables learners to improve their self-confidence and develop a range of useful skills such as speaking more confidently in different social situations and cooking a wider range of healthy food.
- Tutors check the progress learners are making frequently and provide effective support where it is needed. Consequently, learners produce work that is at least of the standard expected. However, written targets are not always sufficiently specific to support learners' progress, for example, targets asking learners to 'learn nouns and adjectives' without further detail or clear timescales.

- Tutors develop learners' English and mathematics skills well. For example, learners develop their use of English, spelling and specialist terminology in relation to cooking and sewing. Tutors contextualise mathematics by, for example, using ratios to increase recipe ingredients to produce dishes for a greater number of people and by using a 60-degree angle to create a hexagram star shape in textiles.
- Managers carry out unannounced observations of teaching and learning on all staff annually in November. Observations are rigorous with a strong focus on the impact of teaching on learning. Managers have a clear understanding of the service's strengths and weaknesses. They supplement formal observations by short walk-through visits to lessons during the spring and summer terms and then systematically follow up tutors' action plans following their observations. Tutors are encouraged to be reflective and evaluate the effectiveness of each of their lessons. However, this is not yet done consistently well enough to drive individual improvement.
- Retention and success rates for learners are high and generally improving, with most learners completing their qualifications successfully. Different groups of learners achieve as well as each other.
- Managers work hard to collect data on the destinations of unemployed learners but the response rate is generally quite low. From the data available, about one third of those learners progress into employment, education or further training.
- Leaders and managers have good capacity to improve the provision. Self-assessment is a very thorough and inclusive process and provides an accurate picture of the provision, and the consequent improvement actions are effective. Reporting to elected members is frequent. However, although sharply focused on the participation of target groups and learner outcomes, it does not focus sufficiently on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The provision is developed well to meet local needs. Very strong partnerships with a wide range of organisations provide flexible and responsive provision delivered from a range of neighbourhood learning venues such as health centres, children's centres, libraries and sheltered housing complexes. Managers have a very good understanding of local needs obtained from a wide variety of published information and through liaison with community organisations. Managers recognise the need to develop their work with employers further to provide work-experience opportunities to adult learners.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- unannounced observations are spread over a longer period of time to reduce their predictability
- tutors systematically use reflective practice to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- support and challenge by elected members includes consideration of the quality of teaching and learning
- the high success rates are further increased by ensuring that a greater proportion of learners who complete the course achieve their qualification
- all remaining staff swiftly complete their Prevent training
- further approaches to collecting learner destinations are considered to improve the response rate.

Yours sincerely

Mike White

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we were assisted by the head of service as nominee. We met you, your management team, two senior leaders and two elected members. We observed lessons with members of your staff and looked at learners' work. We held meetings with learners, tutors and partners and reviewed key documents including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of learners by reviewing the comments received on Ofsted's online questionnaires, from your own learner survey and by seeking the views of learners during on-site inspection activity.