

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

Local authority

Inspection dates

23–26 May 2017

Overall effectiveness		Good	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Adult learning programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Apprenticeships	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Good	

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- The council has developed a good range of programmes and opportunities which successfully attract and engage learners facing the greatest challenges, including those from the most disadvantaged areas.
- The large majority of current learners are making good progress in their learning and are on track to achieve on time.
- Apprentices develop good job-related skills and improve their effectiveness in the workplace.
- Governors are very effective. They focus strongly on improving the quality of provision and achieving better outcomes for learners.
- Leaders and managers are ambitious for the success of all learners. They ensure that courses are good and that they continue to improve.
- Learners on preparation for employment and family learning courses gain good personal skills and are prepared well for their next steps in learning and employment.
- Support to ensure that all learners succeed is very effective, particularly for the most vulnerable and for those facing multiple challenges such as disability, deprivation, illness and low self-esteem.
- Managers have developed very effective partnerships with other organisations, resulting in good and improved outcomes for all learners.
- Tutors and assessors use a wide range of activities very effectively, ensuring that teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good.
- The targets that teachers set for learners often lack precision. As a result, they have limited value for planning learning, evaluating learners' progress, and supporting learners to develop their skills swiftly and effectively.
- Staff do not use initial assessment consistently well to ensure that all apprentices make sufficient progress in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT).

Full report

Information about the provider

- In 2015, the population of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council was 304,813 and 60% of the residents were of working age. The employment rate is equal to that of Yorkshire and Humberside, and is the highest in South Yorkshire. School pupils' achievement of five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is below the national average.
- Learning takes place in over 20 community venues, including schools, children's centres, the civic centre building and a local prison. The council provides adult learning, including family learning, and apprenticeships.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that learners have ambitious learning targets that enable them to understand exactly what they need to do to make good progress, improve their work and develop new skills.
- Make better use of the results from initial assessment so that programmes provide sufficient challenge for apprentices and a much higher proportion of apprentices receive the support they need to make at least a good rate of progress, improve their skills and achieve qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT at an appropriate level.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers are ambitious for the success of all learners, particularly those from deprived areas. They make sure that learners benefit from courses that are linked successfully to regional priorities for raising academic achievement, community development and improving the local economy.
- Leaders and managers have made good progress in tackling the recommendations from the last inspection and have set challenging development targets to ensure that the provision continues to improve and to meet the needs and interests of learners. Staff understand well the targets set for them in relation to improving the quality and outcomes of their courses.
- Managers and staff place a strong and successful focus on supporting learners to improve their personal, social and employability skills. Leaders and managers have made a strategic decision to deliver fewer recreational courses such as art and crafts, and to focus instead on providing more family learning and functional skills courses. This has ensured that most learners now improve their skills in these subjects.
- Managers are relentless in their pursuit of excellence. They monitor progress towards targets relating to outcomes for learners weekly to ensure that priorities such as attendance rates and learners' progress are improving. They act swiftly to ensure that all current learners receive the support that they need so that they do not fall behind in their studies and can achieve within the planned timescale. This ensures that learners make good progress.
- Managers have successfully brought about improvements to teaching, learning and assessment. They manage the work of staff robustly, using effective observation of lessons and high-quality professional development to tackle weaknesses and promote good practice. Coaching and mentoring are particularly successful in improving the work of staff. Managers have a good understanding of the areas for further improvement and are making progress to address these.
- Managers are rigorous in evaluating the quality of provision, and they take appropriate account of the views of learners and other stakeholders. They correctly identify areas for improvement in the quality improvement plan. The plan has resulted in sustained improvement across important aspects of the provision, such as more thorough selection and monitoring of subcontractors.
- Leaders and managers have established highly effective partnerships with other public services and formed 'Team Doncaster'. This partnership with other organisations ensures that the range and content of the provision is aligned to local and regional priorities, such as the efficient and effective introduction of the new apprenticeship reforms.
- Leaders and managers monitor the progress made by all learners very effectively and have a clear understanding of how well learners are doing. They pay close attention to the progress and achievement of different groups of learners, so that none is disadvantaged or underachieves. As a result of this monitoring, no significant differences exist between the achievement of different groups of learners.
- Leaders and managers promote all forms of equality very effectively, including equality for

learners who suffer economic disadvantage. They ensure that suitable courses are targeted at learners with the greatest needs, such as those with children at schools in areas facing the greatest disadvantage.

- Leaders and managers ensure that learners are prepared well for successful lives in modern Britain. They promote fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance towards those with different backgrounds, faiths and beliefs. This work has resulted in a strong culture of inclusion and support where learners thrive.

The governance of the provider

- The governing body has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the provision. Governors have established close and effective scrutiny of its quality and outcomes, and of leaders' decision-making, which ensures that the apprenticeships and adult, family and community learning service meet their objectives.
- Senior leaders provide a good level of challenge to managers and are well informed about how effectively programmes provide good value for money and meet the needs of local communities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff ensure that all learners understand e-safety and know how to keep themselves safe online. Parents on family learning courses develop increased awareness of how to protect their children from different types of abuse.
- All staff have a good understanding of how to ensure that learners remain safe and what to do if they become concerned about risk. Managers have ensured that the comprehensive safeguarding policies are implemented, and keep accurate records of vetting and concerns. Staff promote the welfare of all learners. They ensure that learners feel safe and are protected from harm.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Managers provide effective adult learning courses that are targeted well at learners from areas of high disadvantage who have often had a poor experience of education. Learning takes place in a range of community venues, including primary schools and children's centres that are easy for learners to get to, and which fit in with their other commitments.
- Tutors provide good support for learners, many of whom have significant social difficulties which inhibit learning. This help enables learners to participate fully in their learning, develop their skills and make good progress. A high proportion of learners achieve their qualifications, particularly in functional English, which prepares them well for their next steps in education, employment or training.
- Assessors liaise well with apprentices' line managers in the council. They plan learning effectively with the apprentices and their line managers to meet the needs of the job role so that apprentices can make a valuable contribution to the workplace. Assessors check

apprentices' progress and skills development, and plan further learning very effectively. Apprentices' line managers review progress frequently. They give helpful feedback to assessors on the progress made by apprentices and what they need to work on to improve their skills. As a result of improvements in the monitoring of learners' progress, most current apprentices are now on track to achieve within the planned timescale.

- Skilled and knowledgeable tutors in adult learning use a variety of good teaching methods to ensure that learners make good progress in lessons. They establish relaxed but purposeful learning environments which help to build up learners' confidence. For example, tutors plan the involvement of learners' children in family learning sessions well, so that learners gain a good understanding of how to support their children with their schoolwork. Learners and apprentices benefit from a thorough and supportive induction to their learning.
- Tutors and assessors promote equality of opportunity and diversity well. Learners develop a good understanding of how people have different needs, and they respect others in their communities and workplaces. For example, adult learners demonstrated a good understanding of freedom of speech and the importance of respecting different cultures when preparing for a speaking and listening examination. In a functional skills session, apprentices explored conventions across different countries for recording numbers and writing speech marks.
- Adult learning tutors make good use of a comprehensive and supportive initial assessment process to plan learning based on learners' starting points. However, assessors do not use the results of initial assessments well enough to set targets for apprentices to improve their skills in functional English, mathematics and ICT. As a result, a minority of apprentices receive insufficient challenge to enable them to fulfil their potential. For example, assessors do not challenge apprentices sufficiently to attain qualifications beyond the minimum level required for their programmes. A few apprentices find their learning too easy.
- Adult learning tutors provide helpful feedback and identify common spelling and grammatical errors, enabling learners to improve their work. As a result, learners complete work to a high standard and make good progress. However, assessors' written feedback to apprentices is not sufficiently helpful and does not help in the setting of targets for improvement to help apprentices make more rapid progress.
- Short-term targets for apprentices and some adult learners are not always specific or individual enough. They fail to identify steps for learners to improve and make swift progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Adult learners and apprentices enjoy their learning. They develop a positive attitude to learning which improves their future prospects and raises their aspirations to acquire higher-level qualifications.
- Learners develop their confidence in working with others and improve their personal, social and employability skills. For adult learners, attendance on short courses and functional skills provision provides a springboard for progression to wider learning, including apprenticeships.

- Tutors make good use of naturally occurring opportunities to address issues of equality and diversity and to promote British values. For example, in a functional skills mathematics session, the tutor used the forthcoming general election as a context for learners to practise working with percentages by looking at the numbers of people choosing not to vote. This led to very useful discussion on the value of democratic participation.
- Learners are well supported by their tutors. They find them easy to contact and talk to. Apprentices benefit from high levels of care and support from assessors, which creates a positive learning environment in which they can flourish, successfully developing their confidence and making progress in their learning.
- Learners receive good information, advice and guidance throughout their courses. Members of the apprenticeship staff team attend careers events in schools and organise events to familiarise applicants with the nature of council employment. Two dedicated careers staff are available to support apprentices, and assessors incorporate careers development sessions into their off-the-job sessions. On adult learning courses, learners receive effective careers advice when they need it.
- Learners feel safe and are respectful of others. Apprentices are able to articulate well a good understanding of safeguarding and the risks of extremism and radicalisation. They are also well aware of e-safety and can discuss the measures they have taken to keep themselves safe online.
- Attendance rates are good overall, but are low for the few apprentices on functional skills courses.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- The large majority of current learners make good progress from their starting points and many, particularly those with low prior academic attainment and problems which inhibit learning, exceed their own expectations.
- Most learners who attend courses that do not lead to qualifications achieve their learning goals. Learners make good progress in improving their personal, social and communication skills, self-confidence and employability skills.
- The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT courses is high. Retention rates are good and improving.
- Learners acquire qualifications, skills and knowledge that enable them to progress to their chosen career, employment or further education and training. A significant minority of adult learners progress from entry-level qualifications to higher levels. They receive good support to improve their chances of securing long-term employment. The large majority of apprentices progress to positive destinations, especially within the local authority.
- Learners' work is of a good standard and, in a few cases, exceeds the requirements of the qualifications and learners' goals. Learners become increasingly confident and motivated throughout their programmes.
- Most current apprentices are on track to achieve within the planned timescale. Apprentices on business administration programmes achieve particularly well and quickly develop a good range of job-related skills.

- Since the last inspection, achievement rates for learners, particularly apprentices, have been erroneously depressed by reporting errors which were largely beyond the control of the provider. During this period, learners continued to receive good support and made good progress in improving their skills and knowledge, although too few learners completed their programme within the expected time.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes

Good

- Community and family learning courses take place in locations across the borough. At the time of the inspection, 441 learners were enrolled, the large majority attending short non-accredited courses on family learning and longer courses aimed at improving learners' functional skills in English and mathematics. A smaller number of learners were enrolled on community learning courses aimed at improving their employability skills. A substantial number of adult learners are from disadvantaged communities and have low levels of previous educational achievement.
- Tutors are well qualified and use a wide range of teaching activities to engage learners successfully in their learning. They successfully develop learners' confidence and ensure that learners enjoy their learning. As a result, learners make good progress in developing their personal, social and employability skills. They are able to overcome isolation and function more effectively in their communities.
- Parents attending family learning courses, many of whom experience challenging circumstances, acquire valuable skills that help them to improve their parenting and understand and support their children's learning better. Many parents appreciate the shared learning time they have with their children while attending family learning sessions on school premises. Learners on courses in English and mathematics are successful in developing their vocabulary, comprehension and oral presentation skills, and are prepared well to use numerical skills in their everyday lives.
- Tutors provide good feedback to learners on English and mathematics courses. This enables learners to improve their skills in these subjects.
- Tutors support their learners well. High levels of mutual respect exist between learners and their tutors. Learners feel safe and are respectful of others. They know whom to contact if they have concerns.
- Managers work well with local community organisations to respond to the needs of severely disadvantaged groups in the area. For example, they have developed new provision that helps asylum seekers to enhance their ability to function within the community, and to raise their levels of self-esteem. The council's carefully procured subcontracting arrangements enhance its ability to make specialist provision, such as that for adults with learning difficulties.
- A well-designed and comprehensive 'learner journey' booklet helps to identify learners' learning needs, and provides a good basis for recording and evaluating achievement on courses that do not lead to qualifications. However, learners' individual learning targets often lack precision, which inhibits their usefulness as a basis for evaluating progress made, or for planning further learning and setting more challenging learning goals.

Apprenticeships

Good

- Four vocational areas, the largest of which is business administration, provide for 97 apprentices. Of these, 73 are intermediate-level apprentices, 23 are on advanced-level programmes and one is on a higher-level apprenticeship.
- Managers have taken decisive and effective steps to increase the proportion of apprentices completing their qualifications in the planned time. As a consequence, current apprentices are making good progress and the very large majority are expected to complete within their agreed timescales.
- Assessors work successfully in close partnership with apprentices' line managers in their workplaces to plan and review learning. Line managers make useful contributions in apprentices' progress reviews and during the initial selection of units, ensuring that the programme matches job roles well and enabling apprentices to make a positive contribution in their workplace.
- Assessors provide high levels of care and support for apprentices, and this fosters productive relationships and effectively nurtures a sense of well-being. As a result, apprentices enjoy learning and develop increased confidence and self-esteem that helps them to carry out their job roles well. For example, they feel more confident about answering telephone calls from external clients including members of the public. Many are given increased responsibility at work as they become more competent.
- Apprentices make good progress in group and individual learning sessions which significantly enrich and deepen their understanding of key topics. For example, during sessions on interview techniques, apprentices showed significant improvement in their ability to answer key interview questions, adding personal experience to their answers.
- Assessors plan learning sessions effectively. They use their strong workplace experience well to ensure that apprentices understand the links between theory and practice. As a result, rich discussion of practical examples often takes place. For example, apprentices explore issues of confidentiality and the importance of taking responsibility for secure storage of personal data. These discussions help apprentices to develop good vocational skills.
- Assessors have high expectations of apprentices, and successfully encourage them to produce work of a good standard. For example, business administration apprentices are encouraged to communicate directly with clients and the public. They consistently produce written work to a good standard, such as effective emails that communicate key messages succinctly, and accurate minutes of meetings.
- Assessors do not consistently set effective individual targets to help apprentices to develop work skills. Too often, targets are insufficiently specific to enable apprentices to understand how their work can be improved. As a result, too many apprentices do not receive sufficient challenge to develop their skills swiftly and effectively.
- Assessors do not make good enough use of the findings of initial assessment to plan learning for apprentices in English, mathematics and ICT. As a result, too many apprentices tackle the same activities in functional skills sessions, irrespective of their starting points, and do not receive the appropriate support for their individual needs.
- Assessors' written feedback provided at apprentices' progress reviews is not sufficiently

helpful to ensure that apprentices know what they need to do to improve the standard of their work.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51578
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,249
Principal/CEO	Jennefer Holmes
Telephone number	01302 736 000
Website	www.doncaster.gov.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	-	372	-	59	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	41	32	13	10	-	1		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
Funding received from:	Education and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Aspiring 2 CIC Breaking Beats Ltd Proper Job Theatre Company Cirque Consulting ICO DCLT Elite Training CIC The Cascade Foundation							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of skills and enterprise, as nominee. 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 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.

Inspection team

Dan Grant, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Pullen	Ofsted Inspector
Jonny Wright	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Hartmann	Ofsted Inspector

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