

Birmingham City Council

Local authority

Inspection dates

26–27 and 28–29 September 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not dealt fully with the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection; self-assessment is not sufficiently self-critical, the provision is no longer good.
- Senior leaders in the governance role do not hold senior managers to account sufficiently; they do not request written reports on the performance of the service and do not know enough about the quality of provision to set challenging improvement targets.
- Managers do not make good use of data to understand the difference they make to the lives of individual learners; data on the achievement of qualifications is too positive and does not support meaningful analysis or the production of specific improvement actions.
- Managers have an inflated view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They focus too much on tutors' performance and not on the impact they have on learners' progress.
- Achievement rates are high, but learners, particularly those returning learners on non-accredited programmes, are not fully prepared for their long-term aspirations and their next steps.
- Tutors do not raise learners' awareness of e-safety and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism sufficiently; as a result, learners are not confident enough to protect themselves and their families in these respects.

The provider has the following strengths

- A good number of learners achieve high grades in their GCSEs in English and mathematics; this helps them to progress to further training in vocational areas, careers and employment.
- Learners' personal development and behaviour are good; they learn and apply their skills to lead more fulfilling lives in society.
- Experienced and well-qualified tutors provide valuable support to learners to progress in their learning and careers by helping them overcome a range of personal barriers.
- Staff promote British values in classes well; as a result, learners learn to value and respect each other. They enjoy learning in a harmonious learning environment and improve their life chances.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Birmingham City Council provides a range of accredited and non-accredited programmes at entry level, level 1 and level 2 through the Birmingham Adult Education Service (BAES). The purpose of these programmes is to improve learners' employment prospects through the development of appropriate skills, health and well-being, and social and community cohesion. Of the 1.2 million residents in Birmingham, 46% are under the age of 30 and almost 250,000 adults of working age have low-level qualifications or no qualifications at all. Over 180 languages are spoken across the city. Unemployment rates at 6.1% are 3.7 percentage points above the national average. Child poverty is significant, with 37% of children living in deprived households.
- BAES provides over 2,000 courses annually from 10 main centres and 60 partner venues. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), English and mathematics make up over 50% of the offer. Other programmes with substantial numbers are modern foreign languages, and vocational programmes in information and communication technology (ICT), supporting teaching and learning in schools, and crafts. Non-accredited provision makes up 66% of the provision. Since the previous inspection, the service has started to deliver study programmes for a handful of learners aged 16 to 18, which is 1% of the total provision. In addition, four subcontractors work in the community to increase participation rates from specific geographical areas. A new principal was appointed in June 2015.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Those in the governance role should provide more effective scrutiny and challenge to managers to improve the quality of learning to the highest possible standards by:
 - outlining reporting requirements to the senior managers so that they produce periodic reports on the basis of individual learners on roll compared to previous years, their achievement of qualifications and wider skills, their progression and destinations and the difference the service makes to the lives of local residents by ward, learner groups, ethnicity, gender and levels of learning against the stated priorities for the service
 - seeking regular reports from the senior managers on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and its impact on learners.
- Ensure that staff take full account of the findings of initial and any other assessments as well as learners' aspirations and prior learning to:
 - devise specific, measurable and challenging learning aims for learners
 - conduct a thorough review of learners' progress and evaluate their achievements
 - plan individualised programmes of learning for the returning learners based on their progress on previous learning and their long-term aims.
- Collect, analyse and use data at individual learner level on all stages of the learners' time with the service, such as participation, attendance, progress, achievement and progression, to identify any patterns, monitor the impact on learners and set targets to

improve further.

- Use this information to plan learning programmes and target resources at different parts of the city, learner groups and communities.
 - Use the data to produce a self-critical report on the true performance of the service and devise a quality improvement plan that sets clear targets for improving the quality of learners' experience.
- Prepare staff to raise learners' awareness fully of e-safety and the risks posed by the internet, including those of radicalisation and extremism by:
- making regular references to the topic by using media and the learners' personal experiences to deepen their understanding of the issues as they affect them and their families
 - including e-safety in class discussions to make learners aware of dangers such as identity fraud, social media and cyber bullying with real-life case studies and the steps they can take to protect themselves and their children.
- Ensure that observers evaluate the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on learners during learning walks and lesson observations, and set targets for tutors to improve learning and skills development for learners.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have been too slow in tackling the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. They have not rectified sufficiently weaker elements of teaching, learning and assessment such as the use of questioning, information learning technology, and the use of findings from initial assessment to set precise and challenging targets. Similarly, their use of data remains a weakness. The self-assessment report is not accurate as it paints an optimistic picture of the service based on the achievement of qualifications. For example, leaders and managers focus solely on the achievement of qualifications and do not measure learners' progress, skills development, and how learners apply these skills to their lives, or learners' progression or destinations. In the latest self-assessment report, they did not find weaknesses in the outcomes for any of the provision except for study programmes. As they still do not collect data on an individual learner level, managers are unable to provide an accurate picture of the achievements of learners, their progress, progression and destinations. As a result they are unable to evaluate the full impact of the provision on learners.
- Leaders and managers collect data to inform them of the achievement and successful completion of qualifications, with some analysis to meet funding body requirements. However, managers are not able to give a clear picture of individual learners' achievement and progress. This limits their ability to monitor and track learners' progress and put in place actions to ensure that all learners make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders and managers have failed to analyse and identify learners' next steps and destinations. Therefore, they do not know whether learners have made a positive difference to their lives beyond the achievement of their qualifications.
- The monitoring and tracking of learners' progress are not regular or rigorous enough. Senior managers stopped the positive tracking of learners' progress and destinations that middle managers had instigated at curriculum level in 2014/15. This means that they are unable to demonstrate a trend or compare performance over years. For example, in the year prior to this inspection, the managers completed a destination survey based on a sample of learners that informed them that 79% of learners progressed within the service. This information is partial and not meaningful enough to enable managers to draw any firm conclusions or devise any purposeful action plan to improve.
- Managers assess the quality of their provision and work strenuously to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of teaching, learning and assessments through learning walks and observations. However, they do not evaluate the impact of tutors' activities on learning and progress. Despite extensive management action to measure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, weaknesses remain. Managers measure the performance of the tutor rather than the overall progress and skills development of the learners. Managers acknowledge this weakness.
- Managers provide very good-quality study support and personal support for learners. This includes extensive assessment for dyslexia and support for learners to unlock their potential. Leaders invest in high-quality, up-to-date learning resources to enrich learners' experiences, and staff support for learners is readily available. Senior leaders have invested heavily in improving the quality of accommodation. The centres are airy, light

and welcoming. Consequently, the quality of accommodation, which was considered a weakness at the previous inspection in 2014, is now a strength.

- Leaders and managers at all levels work particularly effectively with external agencies, such as Jobcentre Plus and other educational establishments, to shape and plan programmes that meet the needs of learners and serve the community. The programmes are delivered locally and flexibly and avoid duplication. These are focused on key local enterprise partnership (LEP) priorities such as developing literacy, numeracy, ESOL and ICT with progression routes into employment. This approach enhances the skills and qualifications of disadvantaged adults to improve their chances of gaining employment and/or progressing into further education.
- Senior leaders and managers have a strong vision and mission to improve the lives of learners. They have invested in their staff through a comprehensive and well-planned professional development programme. As a result, staff are well skilled and qualified and have good levels of expertise in their vocational subjects.

The governance of the provider

- Senior directors and the portfolio holder who undertakes the governance function of the service are knowledgeable and very supportive of the principal. They hold the service in high esteem and see it as the key vehicle to improving social cohesion and the employment prospects of the local residents. They have provided resources and identified opportunities for growth and diversification, for example, into study programmes, and potentially apprenticeships. They have provided good financial support to improve the quality of accommodation and learning resources.
- The directors and those in a governance role do not fulfil their function of scrutinising the performance of the service effectively, as they do not seek regular written reports on its performance. In her fortnightly briefings, the principal focuses on new developments and the promotion of the service to adults, and not on the difference the service is making to the lives of local communities or particular wards, the unemployed or groups of learners. Senior leaders accept achievement of qualifications, participation in learning and satisfaction levels among learners as a benchmark of good-quality provision. As they do not have a clear picture of the effectiveness and impact of the provision – including its strengths and areas for improvement – senior leaders do not set challenging targets to improve the performance to higher levels. For example, senior leaders do not request reports on the achievement of individual learners and their progression or destinations. Similarly, they have not set targets to improve learners' understanding of e-safety and on protecting their communities from the threats of radicalisation and extremism.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers follow the safer recruitment policy and good practice to employ suitable staff.
- Senior staff have strong links with agencies involved in safeguarding. The designated safeguarding officer is a member of 'Channel', the forum that deals with counter-terrorism, and is well aware of the dangers and steps the service needs to take to protect learners. Learners know whom to contact should they have any concerns. The

safeguarding officer responds appropriately to their concerns, records and monitors incidents appropriately, and refers on to relevant agencies. As a result, learners feel safe and undertake safe working practices. Risk assessment of most activities – except safety and security in the centres – is thorough.

- Most buildings where learning takes place are dual-use or have open access. During the short phase of this inspection the team noticed a relaxed approach to the safety and security of learners. For example, some of the front-line staff did not conduct identity checks on 'bona fide' users and invited guests. It was not easy to identify learners from other visitors, a concern raised by a few learners. Locks on entry to classrooms were not used, and the entry to the classrooms was not controlled. Having been made aware of the potential risks, senior managers and those in the governance role took immediate steps to implement the issuing of photo identity badges to all learners over the next four weeks. Checks on visitors and contractors were fully implemented immediately, and the access to classes was controlled. This reassured the learners and the inspection team.
- Learners have a good awareness of British values. This prepares them well for life in the UK. However, learners do not have sufficient understanding of the risks associated with e-safety, radicalisation and extremism, and of how to protect themselves and their communities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Tutors do not analyse the current skills, barriers to learning and aspirations of the learners well enough. This means that in their learning plans, learners are not set personal targets for the short, medium and long term. For example, a learner's future goal was to become a classroom assistant after gaining a qualification in mathematics. However, the learner's personal targets were to improve spelling and research job roles and did not reflect this aspiration. Since the large majority of learners return to learning with the service, it is not clear how far have they progressed in achieving their long-term goals. This means that learners do not receive sufficient challenge to achieve their full potential.
- Many tutors do not ask sufficiently probing questions to check and extend learners' understanding. This aspect was weak at the previous inspection. They do not manage the classroom well to seek contributions from quiet learners to build their confidence and ensure understanding. For example, during a presentation in an English speaking class, the tutor did not encourage learners to gain a better understanding of the topic through questioning and allowed the few more vocal learners to give all the answers. As a result, the tutor could not be sure whether the less vocal learners had gained the required understanding. However, in modern language classes tutors use questions very well in target languages to probe, check learning, and encourage learners to find the meanings of new words.
- Tutors are not skilled and confident enough to raise sufficiently learners' awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. They discuss safeguarding in abstract terms and explain the meaning of definitions without using the numerous real-life examples from the local news and exploring the possible impact on the learners' daily lives. However, staff are very skilled at promoting awareness of British values across the provision. This awareness helps learners integrate into society better. This good practice is not currently

being shared to promote 'Prevent' effectively to learners in a meaningful way.

- Learners are aware of their group targets for learning and the timescale for progress reviews. However, tutors do not take full account of learners' previous learning and their work experience to set personal specific, relevant, measurable and time-bound targets. In the majority of lessons, learners work on the same tasks. Tutors do not consider learners' ambitions when planning lessons to motivate them to progress faster. Learners are not made fully aware of the timescale and steps they need to take to realise their long-term ambitions.
- Most tutors do not feel confident to make effective use of learning technology to inspire new ideas, promote research and to extend understanding of key topics. They confine the use of technology to making presentations and promoting discussions. For example, while enrolling learners onto the virtual learning platform, tutors fail to reinforce the awareness of e-safety and the associated risks to them while shopping online, searching the internet and dealing with spam emails.
- Leaders have recently purchased 150 tablet computers to make greater use of technology to make it easier for learners to fit learning around their lifestyle and get the most out of self-directed learning. Tutors in modern foreign languages and ESOL classes use technology well to improve reading skills, explore vocabulary and encourage independent research.
- While tutors reinforce the importance of English well in classes, they are not sufficiently skilled or confident in finding opportunities to build in practical mathematics effectively in vocational subjects. For example, learners copied mathematics targets from the board with no checking of their understanding of the context.
- Tutors are well-qualified, experienced and enthusiastic. They use their expertise well to motivate and challenge learners to develop the skills they need to progress into employment, higher education or further training. The vast majority of tutors successfully use their experience to employ a range of strategies to create activities that meet learners' needs. They support learners to deepen their understanding of key topics and improve their skills. For example, a tutor in an ESOL class used a wide range of visual props to help learners to identify and pronounce correctly the names of common British foods. This was directly beneficial not only to their learning goals, but also to their personal lives, encouraging healthy eating and exploring new and different foods.
- Tutors know their learners well and have high ambitions for them. They provide high levels of care and support for learners who often have considerable barriers to learning. Learning environments in centres are highly positive and learners feel safe to disclose sensitive personal information, take risks and ask questions confidently, accelerating their skills development. As a result, learners enjoy learning and they can see the positive impact of the progress they are making in their personal lives and academic studies.
- Tutors assess learners' work effectively and provide constructive written feedback in the vast majority of courses. However, in a minority of courses they do not routinely correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. This results in learners not valuing the correct usage of written English and not improving their skills rapidly enough.
- The majority of tutors set precise and specific course targets for groups and record them well on individual learning plans to support skills development effectively. They routinely review and revise these targets after feedback from learners. For example, targets in

English classes focused specifically on the development of key grammatical skills. Learners' progress over time was recorded well in detailed progress reviews. Learners enhanced the quality of their written work through reflection and critical self-evaluation, preparing them well for higher-level study.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners come from a very diverse range of backgrounds with a wide range of learning needs. They quickly develop good and trusting relationships in classes. As a result, learners get to know and understand each other well, including their cultures and beliefs. This helps them to develop highly positive attitudes to learning and to learn from each other.
- The culture of respect is evident throughout the various centres and classes. Learners show high levels of respect for one another. They enjoy learning together and develop effective personal skills to manage the demands of modern life. They combine learning in their local centres well with their family and personal responsibilities. Due to significant gains in their confidence, learners apply their newly enhanced communication skills well. For example, to find out about the progress of their children from teachers in schools, speak to their doctors, and deal with other agencies. This helps them to take control of their affairs, thus becoming more independent in their daily lives.
- Attendance and punctuality are good. These have improved since the previous inspection.
- Tutors are very caring and enthusiastic and make a positive difference to the lives of their learners by providing support and encouragement. As a result, learners develop a good range of personal, study and social skills that help many of them to raise their aspirations and progress to further learning, particularly into higher-level courses within the centres such as supporting teaching and learning in schools and business administration, as confirmed by the locally held data. In the process, they develop the resilience to make a significant difference to their own and their children's lives.
- Learners' achievements are celebrated through 'outstanding learner' awards. This inspires other learners to do better. Learners are very aware of the difference learning makes to their job prospects and their personal lives. Learners enjoy their learning, are well motivated during learning sessions and continue their learning between sessions.
- Learners develop a sound understanding of British values. Tutors skilfully relate these to ESOL learners' lives in this country and compare them well to the values in their mother countries. As a result, learners appreciate the values of equality, respect for others' beliefs and religions, freedom of speech, democracy and the rule of law. Learners born in Britain refresh their understanding of British values and appreciate the freedoms that they may have taken for granted. This promotes greater understanding of each other in classes and beyond.
- Learners do not understand well enough the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Learners frequently know whom they could contact if they were concerned about a safeguarding issue; however the importance of e-safety, being aware of dangers and recognising the signs of radicalisation and extremism are not discussed in sufficient detail when opportunities occur in classes. Learners state that they feel safe in the centres they attend.

- A significant number of learners are not well prepared for their next steps, when their goal is to gain employment or to move into training outside the service. They do not have opportunities to undertake work experience or volunteering in preparation for full employment. Learners on courses with compulsory work placements, such as health and social care, and pre-employment training develop valuable experience of practical skills in caring, teaching, retail or catering that enhance their chances of gaining employment.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for a large majority of learners on non-accredited learning aims are very high. However, inspectors found that learning aims were not specific enough and did not show progression for learners. The targets were not precise or challenging enough. In too many cases, tutors do not identify learners' starting points accurately including their prior learning.
- Many tutors do not set precise targets based on learners' identified needs. For example, many ESOL learners had declared that they did not have a curriculum vitae, yet this was not included in their personal targets. Other examples of identified needs included use of the internet and driving, which are essential to improve learners' chances of gaining employment. The tutors failed to include these as learning aims.
- A large percentage of learners return to learning in subsequent years and stay on programmes in high numbers. Beyond the achievement of qualifications, managers do not measure the development of wider skills over time, progression or employment.
- Achievement rates of qualifications in functional skills, awards, certificates and diplomas, and GCSE levels are high. They are particularly good for learners on diploma-level programmes in supporting teaching and learning in schools, some modern foreign languages, and the certificate in creative crafts. For example, achievement of high grades in GCSEs in English and mathematics are well above the national averages. A large number of young adults, while studying their main programme elsewhere, attend the service's GCSE programmes in English and mathematics and complete these qualifications in their local centres. Achievement rates in biology have declined and are now low.
- The standard of learners' work is at expected levels with many case studies of exceptional achievement of learners who started from a very low base. Some of these learners have made good progress over time and entered into higher education or jobs such as learning assistants. The standard of learners' work in English and mathematics is good.
- Outcomes for the handful of learners aged 16 to 18 on study programmes, based on entries for learning aims, have improved, and are now acceptable. Due to poor outcomes for learners in English and mathematics in the first two years of the start of the programme, the managers took effective action and stopped working with a local provider of plumbing and electrical trades. Their work with a current partner in a conservation project is working well; the learners, who face a range of barriers, are enjoying their course and making good progress.
- Outcomes for unemployed adults on the pre-employment training (PET) courses are good. In the current year, the rates of positive destinations, mainly employment, have improved and are good. This has made a very positive impact on the learners and their families; they have gained employment with well-known employers in retail at the Grand

Central project.

- Outcomes are also good for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They develop a good level of awareness of independent living and the steps they need to take to stay safe. In their drama classes, learners get a good insight into people's communication skills through observing their body language.
- Learners of modern foreign languages develop language skills well and learn about the culture, customs and traditions of the country where the languages are spoken. For example, they are able to use the language effectively to ask questions when on holiday. They practise their spoken skills without hesitation and become confident in using their target language.
- Progression is good from entry to level 1 but declining at levels 2 and 3. Since managers collect data on the basis of qualifications and not individuals, their analysis to measure or narrow the achievement gap is not purposeful.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50213
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	13,454
Principal/CEO	Ms Joanne Keatley
Telephone number	0121 303 4318
Website	www.learnbaes.ac.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)	7	4,770	1	1,666	-	7	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
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	-							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	The Pioneer Group-Compass Support Services Thoughts of Others Ltd Witton Lodge Community Association BETTER Pathways							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of curriculum and quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent position statement, self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls 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 of those learners who had continued in learning from previous year. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider and decided not to grade very small study programme provision that was relatively new.

Inspection team

Harmesh Manghra, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Susan Gay	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Hartmann	Ofsted Inspector
Harpreet Nagra	Her Majesty's Inspector
Teresa Williams	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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