

Slough Borough Council

Local authority

Inspection dates

16–19 January 2018

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Despite improvements since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have not yet made sure that teaching and learning are consistently good across all the service.
- Too much teaching, particularly in English and mathematics, fails to motivate learners. As a result, their progress is often too slow.
- Teachers on accredited adult learning courses do not plan carefully enough to meet the needs of all learners.
- Adult learners do not learn enough about how to keep themselves safe when online.
- Leaders and managers do not gather and use sufficient learner progression data to measure the impact of the courses they deliver.
- Teachers do not have enough information at the start of adult learning courses to be able to plan learning effectively according to learners' abilities.
- Too few adults following community learning programmes achieve their goals.

The provider has the following strengths

- Governors, leaders and managers better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the service than at the time of the previous inspection. They have comprehensive plans in place to secure further improvements.
- Leaders and managers work very well with external organisations. They improve the lives of hard-to-reach and vulnerable adults.
- The apprenticeship programme meets the needs of learners well. Those coming from low starting points and challenging backgrounds receive good support to help them succeed.
- Adult learners and apprentices understand British values very well. They respect the ideas and views of others.
- During their courses, adult learners and apprentices improve their confidence well. This helps them to work and live successfully in modern Britain.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Slough Borough Council provides Education and Skills Funding Agency-supported provision for community learning and adult skills in Slough and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The service provides community learning across both boroughs and offers a small number of intermediate apprenticeships, in mainly business administration, in Slough.
- Around a third of Slough's residents are White British and over half are from minority ethnic backgrounds. In the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, over three quarters of residents are White British. The level of unemployment is low; however, there is a skills shortage and pockets of vulnerability in both boroughs. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at A* to C, including English and mathematics, is substantially higher in Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead than England as a whole.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Governors, leaders and managers should make sure that the improvement actions already in place continue at a quicker pace so that adult learners' progress and attainment on all courses are consistently good or better.
- Leaders and managers should improve further the methods they use to capture information about adult learners' next steps so they can better measure the impact of courses.
- Managers should make sure that adult learners improve their knowledge of how to keep themselves safe online.
- Managers should improve the effectiveness of mathematics and English teaching.
- Managers should improve teaching, learning and assessment further by:
 - making sure that teachers have access to, and use productively, information about adult learners' levels of ability at the start of their courses
 - developing further the range and effectiveness of strategies that teachers use to check learning in lessons
 - making sure that all teachers set work that challenges and inspires all learners sufficiently.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not dealt fully with the recommendations from the previous inspection to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Despite much progress, too many weaknesses still exist in teaching and learning on adult learning courses.
- Actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment on adult courses are not effective. Managers do not specify the precise steps that teachers need to take to improve. They do not set clear enough indicators so that they know when teachers achieve their targets. Managers do not always check that staff are carrying out the improvement actions they have been set. As a result, teachers do not improve their teaching quickly enough.
- Although teachers receive training that helps them improve identified weaknesses in classroom practice, this has not led to enough improvements in teaching and learning, particularly on accredited adult learning courses.
- Managers have made rapid improvements to staff management since the last inspection. Teachers whose skills are not at the required standard either improve or leave the service. These measures are beginning to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, but have not yet had enough impact to make sure that these are now good.
- Leaders and managers accurately identify most of the strengths and weaknesses in the service. However, leaders do not have enough information about adult destinations and progression. Consequently, leaders are not fully aware of the impact of their adult learning courses.
- Leaders have high expectations for their learners and the communities in which they serve. Leaders make sure that strategic plans align fully to both councils' development plans. Leaders and councillors within Slough Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead work well together. Accordingly, staff understand their objectives.
- Leaders and managers work very effectively with external organisations. They develop strong partnerships that make a positive difference to the lives of vulnerable, hard to reach and unemployed adults and young people. They plan effective programmes to help learners become independent. As a result, learners gain valuable skills and contribute more fully to the communities in which they live.
- Leaders and managers work positively with social services to plan learning programmes. They develop programmes, including apprenticeships, for adults and young people who have not accessed education or training for some time, or who are vulnerable or isolated.
- Managers review staff performance frequently. They have a much better understanding of the quality of teaching and learning than at the time of the last inspection. They set challenging goals for staff that contribute well to the targets that senior leaders in the borough council set.
- Managers have improved arrangements for checking and improving quality in subcontracted work. They carry out frequent monitoring visits. They undertake joint teaching observations with staff in subcontractors. This results in comprehensive action plans for improvement. They track and check learner progress well through timely

reports. When subcontractors underperform, they hold managers to account effectively.

- Leaders and managers have successfully improved the quality of apprenticeship courses. Almost all apprentices achieve their qualifications and move on to employment or higher levels of learning, or gain promotions. Current apprentices are making good progress.
- Leaders have created a very positive environment where everyone is valued. All staff and learners show respect for each other. Managers have made much progress since the previous inspection in improving the strategies that teachers use to promote British values.
- Borough council leaders frequently review the courses they offer to make sure that these meet the changing needs of communities. Almost all courses offered by the borough councils allow learners to move on to higher levels of learning. A range of employability courses provides good support to adults who want to gain employment. Good links with job centres make sure that adults receive effective careers advice and guidance about employment.

The governance of the provider

- Skilled and well-qualified governors oversee the work of the service effectively. The recent restructure and development of governance has made sure that local and borough priorities align.
- Governors receive detailed, timely and accurate reports from managers. This helps them track and check effectively the work of the service. Governors understand fully the strengths and weaknesses of the service.
- Governors have supported leaders and managers fully over the past year, allowing them to make changes to management structures and improve the performance management process. This has led to improvements in staff performance but has not yet had enough impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
 - Managers place a clear emphasis on learners' safety and security. Adult learners and apprentices feel safe and are safe. They know who to contact should they need to raise a concern.
 - Leaders and managers make suitable recruitment and pre-employment checks when appointing new staff. Well-trained staff follow up safeguarding referrals thoroughly. Records of incidents are comprehensive and up to date.
 - Adult learners and apprentices understand how to keep themselves safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism and learn about the 'Prevent' duty during induction. Apprentices have a very good understanding of how to stay safe online. However, adults do not learn enough about how to protect themselves from online threats, bullying and grooming.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching on adult learning courses is not yet good. Teachers on courses leading to qualifications do not plan tasks in lessons that challenge learners, particularly the more able, sufficiently. As a result, many make slow progress in developing the skills and knowledge that they need to be successful. In contrast, learners on community programmes develop good practical skills. Apprentices make good progress and meet the needs of their employers.
- Teachers do not have sufficient information at the start of adult learning courses about all learners' abilities. This means that they are not always able to plan learning effectively. Although adults take a diagnostic test during induction, not all of them have the time to complete this. The tasks set by the teacher often do not reflect the levels that learners are working towards.
- Most teachers on adult learning courses leading to qualifications do not use questioning effectively to check learning in lessons. They do not probe, assess and improve learners' understanding sufficiently. Learners who are more confident tend to dominate discussions. Those with less confidence are not able to develop their understanding fully.
- Teachers on English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses do not consider learners' ability fully enough when planning lessons. This hinders the progress of learners who are more able, and who are returning to sessions.
- Mathematics teaching on adult courses is not effective enough to help learners progress quickly. Often, a lack of clarity in instructions from teachers and a poor choice of examples confuse learners. This leads to slow progress for most adult learners. In contrast, apprentices make rapid progress in their mathematical skills development.
- Learners work hard in lessons. They concentrate, listen carefully and take part fully. They appreciate the opportunities to improve their skills that their learning gives them.
- Well-qualified teachers on community learning courses use their practical skills effectively to enthuse learners. They help learners to develop good skills that they can use outside the classroom. For example, in a sewing class, a highly skilled teacher helped learners develop a variety of different dressmaking techniques that they could use at home.
- Most teachers make good use of small group work to encourage adult learners to share ideas and develop confidence in their spoken English. In most ESOL lessons, teachers help learners improve their spoken English well. They correct learners' pronunciation sensitively. Apprentices develop good communication skills. They quickly become adept at communicating with clients in a professional manner using email and telephone.
- Learners from diverse backgrounds work very well together in a respectful manner. Teachers develop learners' understanding of British values well, both in induction and throughout courses. For example, in ESOL lessons, teachers help learners to reflect on what it means to be British. They encourage learners to describe their own cultures and then compare this to life in modern Britain.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Adult learners and apprentices work very well with each other in lessons. They respect others' ideas and views and engage sensibly and sensitively in debates and discussions. This improves their confidence and develops their knowledge.
- All learners behave admirably, and almost all are very positive about their learning. They value their education and take pride in their work. They respond quickly to instructions and requests from staff. This allows most learning sessions to flow smoothly.
- Adult learners and apprentices attend well. Teachers now confidently challenge learners about attendance and punctuality. Attendance has risen consistently over the past three years, has reached the target set by leaders, and is high. Managers receive prompt notification if apprentices are absent from the workplace. Apprentices get good information about the absence policy and this helps them develop professional attitudes to attendance at work. The large majority of adult learners and apprentices are punctual and well prepared for their learning sessions.
- Effective and impartial careers advice and guidance help learners to make informed choices about their next steps. Advisory teams give learners useful and informative advice and guidance. Employability and curriculum vitae writing workshops and 'information technology for job hunters' courses prepare adults well for a move into employment.
- Apprentices develop good employability skills that improve their workplace expertise or help them move onto higher-level apprenticeships. They are able to achieve additional qualifications to make them more employable. For example, they take qualifications in food hygiene and sports coaching. All those who have already achieved a high grade in GCSE mathematics take part in a project to develop further their numeracy skills. Extra tuition from the National Youth Agency helps apprentices to learn how to manage money.
- Apprentices receive effective bespoke one-to-one sessions to help them find out about all career options. Sessions on curriculum vitae writing and feedback from mock interviews support them well to improve their skills.
- Managers and teachers support learners very well. Almost all adult learners speak positively about the help and encouragement they gain from their teachers. Apprentices, many of whom have difficult personal circumstances, receive high-quality and personalised support from staff that helps them achieve their qualifications. Because of this help, their self-confidence increases.
- Adult learners and apprentices learn about British values thoroughly at induction and throughout their courses. Teachers have effective discussions with learners about what it means to live in modern Britain and learners are able to put this learning into practice well. Apprentices benefit from a wide-ranging and effective programme of additional activities and extra studies. They complete modules on topics such as safeguarding, e-safety, health and safety and information security. This helps them to keep themselves safe and prepares them for the world of work.
- Leaders and managers celebrate learners' achievements and the progress that they have made. Adult learners attend a celebration event led by the mayor, and apprentices attend the 'Apprentice of the Year' award, and help to plan the event. Apprentices take part in National Apprentice Week, interviewing workers at Slough Borough Council who started as apprentices themselves.

- Leaders and managers have not developed a coherent programme to make sure that all adults develop their learning around subjects such as healthy living, emotional and mental well-being, and staying safe online.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Achievement for the large numbers of adult learners on internally assessed community learning courses requires improvement. The proportion of these learners who achieved their goals declined in 2016/17. Not enough adult learners make good progress from their starting points.
- Although managers track the performance of most different groups of learners, they have not been able to close all performance gaps successfully. Male adult learners do not achieve as well as female learners, and male apprentices have not achieved as well as female apprentices for the past two years.
- Leaders and managers do not analyse thoroughly the destinations of adult learners after completing courses. They do not capture information from learners' previous learning to inform their future learning. As a result, managers are unable to evaluate the impact of the service or how effectively courses help unemployed learners gain jobs.
- The small numbers of adults who take accredited courses achieve well. Pass rates improved from 2015/16 and are high. The large majority of those who take qualifications at entry level, level 1 and level 2, achieve. Achievement for the small number of apprentices improved in 2016/17. Their timely achievement is higher than in other similar services. However, retention rates of adult learners have declined over the past three years.
- Adult learners taking functional skills qualifications achieve well. Most apprentices achieve their functional skills English, mathematics, and information and communication technology qualifications at the first attempt.
- Learners on almost all courses enjoy their learning. In most family and community learning courses, learners' standards of work are good. However, the less effective teaching on accredited courses means that learners' progress in these is slow.
- Teachers and managers collect a wide range of information about learners' aspirations, their levels of satisfaction and their concerns. The vast majority of learners express high levels of approval for their courses. They take pride in the skills they develop during their learning.
- Almost all apprentices move into employment or higher levels of learning at the end of their apprenticeship. Adult learners increase their levels of confidence because of their courses. A large number of adults want to improve their parenting skills and understand the subjects that their children are taking at school. The great majority of learners with these aspirations achieve them.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Over 3,000 adult learners take full- and part-time courses on nine main sites and community centres across Slough and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The large majority of learners take part in community and family learning. Learners also enrol on English, mathematics and ESOL courses, as well as courses to prepare people for employment.
- Most community and family learning sessions inspire and interest learners. However, not enough teaching, particularly on accredited courses, challenges learners to make quick enough progress. In a substantial number of theoretical lessons, teaching is uninspiring. Resources that teachers use are not of a high enough quality to enthuse learners. Those enrolled on English, mathematics and ESOL courses do not make quick enough progress.
- Too few teachers plan learning that challenges all learners. In lessons where there are learners of different levels and abilities, too many teachers set the same tasks for all learners. Consequently, some find the tasks too easy and complete the work quickly, and others struggle.
- Staff help adults to set effective and individualised short, mid- and long-term goals. Although learners revisit these goals throughout the course, they do not inform later learning, particularly when learners re-enrol onto accredited courses.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge and relevant industry experience, particularly in community learning. However, a small number of teachers on adult courses do not have the necessary level of spoken English to teach effectively. This hinders progress because instructions, guidance and explanations are confusing and grammatically poor.
- Leaders have high expectations of what adults can achieve. They have made substantial progress in improving the quality of adult courses in the past four months. Leaders and managers have developed an inclusive and caring environment where learners work well together and enjoy their learning.
- Leaders have planned courses well to make sure they meet the needs of the local community. Most courses lead clearly to higher levels of learning and routes into employment. This supports local priorities well and helps reduce the numbers of those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- Leaders and managers use the community learning fund effectively. They develop learning programmes and projects that make local communities stronger. For example, links with local charities support those affected by domestic abuse and encourage older members of the community to form friendships that aid their well-being. The 'Active Slough' scheme supports organisations and groups to present cultural activities that encourage healthier lifestyles.

Apprenticeships

Good

- At the time of the inspection, there were 25 intermediate and three advanced apprentices. Most apprentices are following courses in business administration. A few follow customer service and youth work courses.
- Staff have high expectations of all apprentices, including those with low starting points. The large majority of apprentices achieve their qualification by the planned end date. Most move on to permanent employment or higher-level apprenticeships.
- Apprentices from diverse backgrounds work positively together. They treat each other with respect and enjoy their learning. They listen carefully to their teachers and discuss topics maturely with their peers. They value the early opportunity to work independently in their apprenticeship and appreciate the trust that their managers place in them.
- Leaders make sure that the apprenticeship programme fully meets the requirements of an apprenticeship. Apprentices enjoy a good range of additional training courses. These prepare them well for working in a business environment.
- Almost all current apprentices are making good progress. They know how well they are doing and how to complete their qualifications successfully.
- Apprentices develop good business administration and customer service skills that employers value highly. As a result, they make a considerable positive contribution in the workplace. Apprentices quickly develop good skills in matters such as minute taking in meetings, managing files and dealing with clients in a professional manner.
- Staff develop apprentices' information technology skills effectively. Apprentices use these skills well to carry out tasks that help their employers. For example, they create advertising material to promote the work of the youth service. They also create a user guide for a database that council staff use to record safeguarding information.
- Apprentices benefit from very good support provided by the apprenticeship coordinators, youth service support team and workplace managers. For example, one hearing-impaired apprentice helps her peers to develop skills in signing. Young people who have been in care receive particularly good support to make sure that they are successful.
- Teachers develop apprentices' English and mathematics skills well. As result, they make rapid progress. Most pass their functional skills qualifications quickly.
- Apprentices communicate with confidence. They develop their English skills well through their training and because of the support provided in the workplace. They learn effective use of email to communicate with clients and to answer telephone calls in a professional manner. They learn how to deal with customer complaints in a sensitive manner.
- All apprentices complete an innovative project based on a topic to do with equality, diversity or safeguarding, and they present their findings to all placement managers. This tests their learning and presentation skills, as well as building their confidence and self-esteem.
- Assessors do not visit a very small number of apprentices often enough, nor do they provide prompt feedback on assessed work for these apprentices. This slows progress for these apprentices.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54429
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3,140
Principal/CEO	Ketan Gandhi
Telephone number	01753 696099
Website	www.slough.gov.uk/communitylearning

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+
	-	172	-	15	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	12	7	1	8	-	-		
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:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adult Dyslexia Centre (Thames Valley)• DASH (Domestic Abuse Stops Here)• Destiny Support• East Berkshire College• MAPIS• Resource Productions• Workers’ Educational Association							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the skills and employment manager, 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, 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. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

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