

Slough Borough Council

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Slough Borough Council was inspected in January 2018. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Slough Borough Council adult learning service provides community learning, and a range of other courses that lead to qualifications, in Slough and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. Although the service also provides a small number of apprenticeships, the monitoring visit focused on the areas for improvement found at the previous inspection. These were all linked to adult learning. Leaders have recently appointed an interim service manager to improve both their capacity and capability to improve this provision.

Themes

What progress have governors, leaders and managers made in improving adult learners' progress and attainment?

Reasonable progress

Governors, leaders and managers have a much-improved focus on achievement rates for adult learners. This has resulted in a range of actions which have led to improvement in learners' progress and achievement and laid the foundations for greater improvement.

Achievement rates for learners on courses that lead to qualifications have increased significantly. Managers' determination not to use tutors who would not improve their teaching skills has supported this improvement.

Managers have ensured that tutors assess learners' starting points more rigorously. As a result, tutors set more meaningful targets for adults on internally assessed community learning courses. This has helped learners make better progress toward achieving their goals. However, because of this more rigorous approach by tutors, achievement rates for these learners have remained static and require improvement.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in securing more information about learners' next steps to enable them to measure the impact of courses? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have secured more information about learners' next steps and have used this information to improve the range of provision.

A telephone survey of learners provided managers with an insight into the impact of their provision. Managers now have a better understanding of whether courses helped learners to achieve their goals. While the overall responses to the survey were positive, a significant proportion of learners indicated that they wanted more courses that would help them secure employment. Managers responded by working closely with Jobcentre Plus staff to develop short and intensive employment preparation courses. These courses focus on improving learners' self-awareness and their English, mathematical and information and communication technology skills.

Tutors capture the intended impact of every course for all current learners. Managers have developed appropriate plans to check the next steps taken by all learners at appropriate timescales following completion of their courses.

To what extent do adult learners understand how to keep themselves safe online? **Insufficient progress**

Leaders and managers have not yet ensured that all learners have enough awareness of ways to remain safe online. Tutors have received a range of useful training in how to ensure that learners are aware of how to keep themselves safe online. However, managers have not been specific enough about exactly the sorts of dangers tutors need to bring to learners' attention.

Tutors do not check effectively enough adults' understanding of the implications of failing to keep themselves safe online. They do not place these dangers in context to help learners to see online safety as a day-to-day problem that they will have to manage.

Managers encourage tutors to discuss online safety with learners and embed opportunities to do this in schemes of work. They currently do not have a clear overview of how and when this happens, and have not made sure that all adults gain sufficient understanding of the potential dangers of being online.

Managers agreed to take urgent action to ensure that all tutors focus on online safety and check learners understand the dangers they may face online. They agreed to complete this action for all learners by the week ending 5 October 2018.

What progress have managers made in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment?

Insufficient progress

Leaders and managers have acted to enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment but these actions have not yet brought about sufficient improvements. The recent appointment of an experienced interim lead for adult education is starting to have a positive impact on the quality of classroom teaching. Leaders also intend to recruit staff to more substantive teaching posts from October 2018 to help improve the consistency of teaching and learning. Managers identified and stopped using English and mathematics tutors whose performance was consistently poor. They have also increased the frequency of 'walkthrough' observations to give them a better understanding of what learners experience.

Too much teaching is still poor, and this reinforces the findings of managers in their own observations of teaching and learning.

Not all tutors check learning well enough to be sure about what adults understand. Tutors do not involve adult learners in the process of learning well enough or question them skilfully enough to help all learners make rapid progress with their learning.

Too many adults complete the same tasks numerous times in lessons, or watch others completing tasks. As a result, most-able learners do not progress quickly enough.

Too few tutors plan lessons that involve, challenge and inspire learners. Consequently, a minority of lessons are dull and uninspiring.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in English lessons is not yet consistently good. However, in the best lessons tutors plan learning well to involve all adults in learning. For example, in an English for speakers of other languages lesson, adults worked very effectively in groups to develop their spoken and written English skills while devising rules for classroom conduct.

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