Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
Local authority

Inspection dates	13–16 November 2018

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

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leadership and management of the provision by Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council (the council) and the subcontractor, Bolton College (the college), are now good.

- Elected members have a good oversight of the quality of the provision. They support and challenge leaders and managers effectively, at the council and the college, to improve.

- Leaders and managers at the council and the college have taken highly effective action to improve the provision. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good.

- Leaders and managers have embedded a culture where respect and tolerance are high priorities. Learners from different cultures and backgrounds work together harmoniously.

- Council and college leaders design courses successfully to meet the needs of people living in the borough of Bolton, including the most disadvantaged residents.

- Council and college leaders and managers establish highly effective partnerships with key stakeholders and employers. Employers benefit from bespoke courses that meet their specific workforce needs.

- Tutors plan activities that engage and enthuse learners. Learners make good progress on their courses and most achieve their qualifications.

- Tutors do not identify or monitor sufficiently learners' individual learning goals on courses that do not lead to qualifications. A few learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.

- Tutors do not routinely provide effective feedback on learners' written work to help learners produce work of a higher standard to reach their full potential.

- A minority of learners do not attend their classes regularly or punctually.

Full report

Information about the provider

■ Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council's community learning is part of the council's Place Directorate. For the past 16 years, the council has subcontracted all its provision to Bolton College as part of a long-term agreement. A manager in the council manages and monitors this contract.

■ Most courses offered by the college on behalf of the council do not lead to formal qualifications. Most courses are in English, mathematics, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), basic information and communication technology (ICT) and employability. Learning takes place in three community learning centres, in Bolton College and in schools, libraries and other community venues across the metropolitan borough.

■ Approximately 284,800 people live in the metropolitan borough. Around one third of the working-age population have qualifications at level 4 or above. This is the same as the North West region and 4% below the national average. Levels of unemployment in the metropolitan borough are higher than regional and national averages and currently stand at 5.5%.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

■ Ensure that council and college leaders and managers give tutors the training they need so they can identify and monitor learners' individual learning goals based on their starting points.

■ Improve the quality of feedback that tutors provide to learners so that it is sufficiently detailed and enables learners to make the progress of which they are capable and produce work of a higher standard.

■ Ensure that attendance and punctuality improve, and that tutors' expectations of learners' attendance and punctuality are high.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good

- Leaders and managers at the council and the college have established an effective strategy for adult and community learning in the metropolitan borough. Council and college leaders and managers have a shared vision of community learning that increases employment prospects and improves the productivity, aspirations and qualification levels of Bolton residents. They design the courses they offer to meet the priorities of the local authority successfully. These include health and well-being, employability and digital skills. Leaders and managers have addressed successfully the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Leadership, management and governance by the council and the college are now good.

- Leaders and managers have created and embedded a culture of respect and tolerance. These are high priorities across all community learning centres and other community venues in the metropolitan borough. Learners from different cultures and backgrounds work together harmoniously.

- Council and college leaders and managers establish highly effective partnerships with a range of key organisations and employers. Through this collaboration, leaders and managers develop courses that meet the local and regional skills priorities very successfully. Employers benefit from bespoke courses that meet their specific workforce needs. For example, learners who are long-term unemployed develop the knowledge and skills they need to become job-ready, such as digital skills. A high proportion of those who complete their courses gain employment.

- Leaders and managers develop progression pathways successfully. Programmes include introductory courses without qualifications to courses at higher levels with qualifications. Learners make good progress in their studies, gaining the knowledge and skills they need to secure employment that meets local and regional strategic priorities.

- Council and college leaders and managers self-assess the current weaknesses correctly. They have an appropriate action plan in place to address the weaknesses identified. Leaders and managers evaluate accurately the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Leaders and managers manage the performance of staff successfully and support them to improve. They ensure that tutors who do not improve no longer teach learners on adult and community courses. Staff are proud to be part of the community learning team.

- Council and college leaders invest appropriately in facilities for learners. Learners benefit from good-quality, well-maintained resources that enhance their learning and develop the knowledge and skills they need for work.

- Managers identify, monitor and support learners who are at risk of leaving their course. However, council and college leaders and managers do not have sufficient oversight of the progress that learners make from their starting points. Leaders and managers do not have a rigorous process in place to track the progress of all learners. As a result, they do not know when learners are not making the progress of which they are capable. They do not put in place strategies to help learners to catch up.

The governance of the provider

■ Council and college leaders and managers provide elected members with reliable analyses of the quality of provision and learners' achievements. Elected members have a sound oversight of the quality of the provision, including teaching, learning and assessment. At the previous inspection, elected members did not support or challenge leaders at the council and the college sufficiently. This weakness has been addressed successfully. Elected members and college senior leaders do not receive detailed enough information about specific courses. As a result, they are not aware of the few courses that require improvement.

■ Elected members and council leaders and managers work very closely with leaders and managers at the college. They ensure that the provision meets the needs of the people in the metropolitan borough. Leaders and managers have updated the courses they offer to focus more sharply on improving the knowledge, skills and employment prospects of local residents. For example, they have increased the number of courses they offer that lead to qualifications in English and mathematics.

Safeguarding

■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

■ Managers at the college maintain an accurate and up-to-date single central record. Their procedures for monitoring safeguarding and reporting safeguarding incidents are effective. Staff follow these procedures closely. College managers currently advise the council informally of safeguarding incidents. Leaders and managers at the council and college rightly recognise the need to formalise reporting arrangements. Safeguarding managers have established links with a wide range of external agencies to whom they refer learners as appropriate.

■ The college designated safeguarding lead and three deputies are appropriately trained at the correct level. All staff receive training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Learners have a good awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. For example, they know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media. Learners feel safe and know how and to whom they should report safeguarding concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment   Good

■ Leaders and managers at the college and the council have successfully improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection. They use the findings from observations of teaching, learning and assessment to support tutors to improve their practices. Advanced practitioners coach, mentor and support tutors effectively in addressing weaknesses identified during observations of teaching and learning.

■ In most lessons, tutors motivate learners and promote and reinforce their learning successfully. Most tutors accurately assess learners' prior knowledge and skills at the start of their course. They use a range of learning activities and resources to meet learners' individual needs. Learners are enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. Most

learners make good progress from their starting points. For example, in ESOL classes tutors use increasingly difficult tasks to challenge learners to complete forms and respond to requests for personal information. Learners in healthy-cooking classes are enthusiastic and eager to take part in activities. They learn how to improve their diet and promote healthy eating for their families. Learners know the progress they are making and what they need to do to complete their course successfully.

- Tutors are well qualified. They use their industrial expertise and experience skilfully to motivate learners. Learners build their confidence and self-esteem quickly and develop their vocational and employability skills successfully. For example, learners enrolled on family-learning programmes develop good mathematical skills and create resources that they use at home to support their children and grandchildren.

- Leaders and managers provide a range of courses that engage hard-to-reach learners in areas of high deprivation. For example, council and college managers work closely together to support people in low-income households to improve their mental health and well-being through attending bespoke courses such as confidence-building and cookery. Leaders and managers provide good progression pathways into further learning, including courses with qualifications.

- Tutors provide effective pastoral and in-class support to learners. They work with learners to overcome any barriers to learning. Learners reinforce and extend their learning outside the classroom. They benefit from using online resources, homework that prepares them for their next lesson and extra sessions for those who are falling behind. Leaders and managers do not provide enough in-class learning support. As a result, too many learners with additional needs do not receive the support they need to make the progress of which they are capable.

- In the majority of lessons, tutors plan learning successfully to meet learners' individual needs. Learners work successfully individually and collaboratively. Tutors make effective use of peer-to-peer learning to help learners make good progress in their lessons. Tutors do not always ensure that the least- and most-able learners make the progress of which they are capable.

- Learners make good progress in developing their oral-communication and problem-solving skills. Tutors embed English and mathematics effectively into lessons to develop learners' knowledge and skills. For example, in floristry learners explore the commercial viability and time constraints of producing headdresses and floral arrangements for weddings.

- Learners become familiar with and use technical terminology accurately. In digital photography for beginners, learners use the terms 'depth of field' and 'exposures' correctly. However, tutors do not identify routinely or help learners to correct spelling and grammatical errors. Learners therefore do not know what they need to do to improve the quality of their written work.

- Most tutors use questioning skilfully to check learners' understanding. However, a few tutors use open questions to the whole class too often. Consequently, they do not check individual learners' progress and understanding sufficiently before they move on to the next topic.

- In lessons, learners respond positively to tutors' oral feedback. Consequently, they make good progress. Tutors' feedback on learners' written work is often too positive. It

does not have enough detail on how learners can improve their work. Tutors do not challenge learners routinely to produce work of a higher standard.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare Good

- Learners improve their confidence and self-esteem because of their courses. They value the opportunities their courses bring them to meet new people and make new friends. Most learners develop good personal and social skills which they use skilfully to integrate more effectively into their communities. For example, learners in ESOL classes extend their vocabulary and improve their spoken English. As a result, they become more active members of their community.

- Tutors, job coaches and student-services staff provide learners with helpful information, advice and guidance about their choice of course and future plans. Learners use this information very effectively to plan their next steps. They develop realistic longer-term goals. For example, learners who enrol on pre-employment, cake decorating, ESOL, and hairdressing courses gain employment, progress onto higher-level courses, including degree courses, or open their own businesses.

- Learners develop their practical and employability skills successfully. For example, in basic computing learners develop skills which they use to apply for jobs online. In cake decorating learners develop industry-standard skills such as making embossers for imprinting designs onto sugar paste.

- Learners feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe online. They understand potential dangers when using social media and they know how to set secure passwords. Learners show a good awareness of the signs associated with radicalisation and extremism. This was a weakness at the previous inspection.

- Learners are respectful, polite and very well behaved. They demonstrate high levels of mutual respect and tolerance while learning and living in diverse communities. They understand fundamental British values and how they apply to them in their daily lives.

- In a minority of lessons, attendance is low, and punctuality is poor. Tutors do not have high enough expectations of learners' attendance and punctuality. They do not challenge sufficiently learners who are late. Learners do not routinely develop these essential work-related attributes.

Outcomes for learners Good

- Most learners make good progress from their starting points. They develop their knowledge, skills and understanding successfully. Learners develop their confidence and the knowledge and skills they use in everyday life and work very effectively. Most learners complete their courses.

- Tutors identify clearly what learners need to do to be successful on courses that do not lead to qualifications. Achievement rates are good. Managers have established effective arrangements for recognising and recording individual learners' progress and achievement. This was a weakness at the previous inspection. However, tutors do not routinely identify or monitor sufficiently individual learning goals based on learners' starting points. As a result, a few learners do not make the progress of which they are

capable.

- Achievement rates are high on courses that lead to formal qualifications. Leaders and managers have increased the proportion of learners who study courses leading to formal qualifications. The greatest increases are in English, mathematics and ESOL courses, which meets the needs of the people in the metropolitan borough. College and council leaders' and managers' actions to improve learners' achievements in functional skills English at level 1 have been successful. Achievement rates are now good. They have implemented actions to improve achievement rates in functional skills mathematics at level 1, which are low. However, it is too soon to see any impact.

- Managers have narrowed the differences in achievement rates for learners from Asian, Black and other minority-ethnic backgrounds. These learners now achieve as well as their White peers.

- The proportion of learners who progress into further study or employment is good and improving. Learners develop a wide range of knowledge and skills that help them to become more independent in their everyday lives. For example, learners develop their ICT skills by checking their spellings online. Additionally, they use search engines on computers and mobile devices to research various topics.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50766
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,598
Director of Place	Gerry Brough
Telephone number	01204 334187
Website	www.bolton.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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	-	1,034	-	-	-	-	-	-

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:	Bolton College

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the adult education manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. They also considered 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

Alison Cameron Brandwood, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bob Busby	Ofsted Inspector
John Oley	Ofsted Inspector
Elaine Price	Her Majesty's Inspector
Derek Williams	Ofsted Inspector

Learner View

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

Employer View

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: http://eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted