

Birmingham City Council

Local authority

Inspection dates

12 to 15 March 2019

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

- An advisory board has strengthened governance arrangements. The board provides highly effective support, challenge and scrutiny for those in a governance role and for senior leaders and managers.
- Interim leaders and managers have raised expectations for staff and learners and have brought about a culture of continuous improvement.
- Teachers are highly skilled. They plan learning activities that keep learners of different abilities interested and challenged. Consequently, most learners make good progress from their starting points.
- Teaching and learning for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners are highly effective. Many learners gain significantly in confidence and develop good speaking and listening skills.
- Learners from areas of high deprivation and cultural diversity develop a good range of essential work-related skills that help them to improve their life chances.
- Most learners benefit from highly effective careers advice and guidance. As a result, most learners move into other courses offered by the service or into volunteering and employment.
- Teaching and learning for a small number of learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are ineffective. As a result, learners do not make enough progress with their independent living skills.
- Staff across Birmingham Adult Education Service (BAES) have much-improved access to management information since the previous inspection. The use of management information is still in development and, as a result, a few staff do not use data routinely to inform actions for improvement.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Birmingham has a population of 1.1 million. Some 40% of its population is under the age of 25 years. Around 110 languages are spoken across the city. Unemployment rates, at 7.7%, are 4.9 percentage points above the national average. Some 40% of Birmingham's population live in the most deprived postcode areas and 37% of children live in deprived households. Around 250,000 adults of working age have low or no qualifications.
- Birmingham City Council provides a range of accredited and non-accredited programmes at entry level, level 1 and level 2 through its adult education service. This provides courses in 10 main centres located in areas of high deprivation across the city. ESOL, English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT) make up around 92% of the adult learning provision. Around 83% of its learners following adult learning programmes live within the 30% most deprived postcodes in England and join the service with very low starting points. Modern foreign languages dominate the service's community learning provision. Around 75% of learners are female across all programmes. Minority ethnic learners make up around 50% of learners on community learning programmes and 75% of learners on adult learning programmes.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Managers should ensure that staff who work with learners who have SEND:
 - provide learners with precise learning goals that support them towards independent living
 - review these goals frequently to monitor learners' progress
 - ensure that these goals are clearly communicated to care workers and support staff to enable them to give learners the support to achieve their goals.
- To improve the use of management information across the organisation, managers should ensure that:
 - all staff have access to the management information system
 - all managers can use the information effectively to analyse trends and intervene to address underperformance
 - teaching staff have the training to use the information to plan learning programmes that address the needs of all their learners.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have a clear vision for adult learning for Birmingham. They aim to improve the employment prospects and well-being of learners. They have a strong focus on developing learners' fundamental skills in English, mathematics, ICT and ESOL. Courses target learners living in the most disadvantaged areas and address key strategic priorities of the city council.
- The interim principal and leadership team have taken effective actions to improve the quality of provision. They have addressed the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection effectively. They have improved self-assessment processes. Staff at every level contribute to the report. This results in an accurate assessment of the service's current strengths and weaknesses.
- Interim leaders and managers have raised expectations for staff and learners. They have engendered a culture of continuous improvement. Managers have introduced new arrangements to rectify weaknesses. For example, termly area quality reviews enable managers to identify and rectify underperformance quickly. Managers engage in focused learning walks every six weeks. They follow these up with appropriate coaching and professional development for teachers that improve their practice.
- Leaders have put effective performance management arrangements in place. Managers ensure that there are clear links between the different aspects of quality improvement. Quality checks, audits of progress and observations of teaching and learning lead to tailored staff development, action planning and coaching. These inform appraisals, which hold staff accountable for improvements in the service. Managers take firm action in the few instances where support and development plans do not result in improvement.
- Managers have improved the accuracy of their judgements on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders have appointed teaching coaches to work with teachers to develop and extend their skills. The use of coaching is beginning to have a positive impact on teaching and the progress learners make.
- Managers have developed good relationships with a few companies to meet the needs of unemployed learners. They co-design short training courses with employers to meet specific workforce recruitment needs. Unemployed learners develop the knowledge and skills they need to become job-ready. If successful, they have a guaranteed interview. A high proportion of those who complete their training programme gain employment. Leaders and managers are aware that employers and other stakeholders are not sufficiently involved in the design of the wider curriculum.
- Staff across BAES have much better access to management information since the previous inspection. However, the use of management information is still in the early stages of development. As a result, a few staff do not use data consistently enough to inform actions for improvement.

The governance of the provider

- The city council has delegated an officer and an elected cabinet member to carry out the governance functions of BAES on its behalf. Interim senior leaders and those in a

governance role have formed an advisory board to support governance. The advisory board provides stability and continuity of governance for the city council. It also allows senior leaders to be responsive in meeting the needs of learners. It has strengthened governance considerably since the previous inspection.

- Board members bring strong expertise from education, health and housing. They use their experience to help senior leaders and managers meet the needs of adult learners in the most disadvantaged areas of the city. Members provide good support for leaders and managers. For example, they have prioritised the provision of necessary resources, such as information technology infrastructure and the appointment of additional staff.
- The advisory board also provides suitable challenge. Board members have rightly raised concerns at the interim nature of senior postholders. They have asked those in a governance role to secure permanent leadership arrangements swiftly to ensure the sustainability of improvements made since the previous inspection.
- Leaders and managers provide those in a governance role and on the advisory board with reliable reports on learners' achievements and destinations. The advisory board has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures. Managers keep up-to-date and accurate records of staff training, qualifications and safeguarding checks.
- Staff and learners know how to report safeguarding incidents. Managers log all incidents and follow them up appropriately. The designated safeguarding lead provides a formal report on safeguarding incidents and referrals to the advisory board and those in a governance role.
- The designated safeguarding lead has strong links with a wide range of external agencies. These include the West Midlands counter terrorism unit, the police and the 'Channel' programme. Managers use these links to train staff and learners on the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. They use them also to refer learners, as appropriate. BAES also takes referrals from some of these agencies to support and integrate into education learners who have been identified as 'at risk'.
- Leaders and managers give safeguarding a high priority. They have raised awareness of both safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty across the organisation. As a result, learners have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of learners and set high standards. They use a range of interesting activities that engage and challenge learners who start with differing abilities. They sequence activities carefully so that learners build their knowledge with confidence. For example, in ESOL speaking and listening classes, learners develop their use of technical language for train travel by extracting information from train station announcements. In GCSE mathematics lessons, the most able learners calculate the

surface area of more complex shapes, such as spheres and cones. Most learners make good progress from their starting points.

- Learners make good progress in ESOL classes. The pace of learning is good, with appropriate reinforcement of language. Teachers model good spoken English. They correct learners sensitively when they mispronounce words or phrases. Learners quickly learn the correct phrases to use with doctors and at their children's schools. As a result, learners gain confidence and develop their speaking, listening and writing skills.
- On modern foreign languages courses, learners develop fluency and confidence during their lessons. They benefit from teachers' excellent cultural insights and make good use of the language they are learning. Learners are inquisitive, knowledgeable and eager to use their language skills at every opportunity. As a result, learners develop highly effective speaking and listening skills that help them when reading the news in their new language, or when travelling abroad.
- In vocational lessons, teachers relate theory to practice skilfully. For example, in ICT lessons, learners confidently word-process formal business letters using appropriate font and style. Learners on counselling courses confidently discuss how they apply coaching theories, such as person-centred therapy and the value of empathy, when working with clients. In ESOL-for-work lessons, learners develop their digital skills. They use these skills confidently to search the BAES careers website to gain work.
- Most teachers check and assess learners' work regularly. Many learners benefit from detailed and helpful feedback from caring and supportive tutors. This support is particularly beneficial for learners who start with low self-esteem. By returning to education, these learners increase their self-confidence, self-awareness and aspirations. This enables them to progress to higher-level courses and back into employment.
- Teachers promote equality and celebrate diversity skilfully through careful planning and by responding to situations as they arise in the classroom. They integrate themes around British values into lessons effectively. As a result, most learners can discuss the meaning of the terms 'democracy' and 'the rule of law', and the importance of respect for different views.
- Most learners who have additional learning needs, such as dyslexia, receive the support they need. Support staff work intensively with individual learners to promote their understanding and skills.
- In a few cases, on specialist provision for learners who have SEND, teachers do not negotiate individual learning goals well enough. Learning goals are too focused on completion of course activities, such as producing a bookmark. They do not address all relevant areas of development, such as increased independence and preparation for work. As a result, too many learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The assessment of learners' starting points is thorough. Teachers use this information skilfully to prepare and plan their lessons. However, on ESOL pre-entry non-accredited courses, personal targets are not clear enough to learners and are not reviewed frequently enough. As a result, learners' personal development is not measured accurately.
- In a few cases on pre-entry level programmes, feedback is too reliant on the use of visual images. Teachers do not explain in any detail how learners can further improve their

work. Consequently, learners are not able to make even better progress.

- In a few cases, teachers do not plan learning activities that closely match the wide range of needs and abilities within the group. In these lessons, learners work on the same task at the same time and pace. As a result, the most able learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners are motivated and confident and take pride in their work. They respect their peers from different cultures and backgrounds and support each other in their learning. Learners in modern foreign language classes assess each other's work and increase their fluency in their chosen language. Learners in ESOL classes help each other to pronounce words correctly. As a result, learners make good progress from their starting points and enjoy, and achieve in their learning.
- Learners from areas of high deprivation and cultural diversity develop a good range of essential work-related skills. Learners studying ESOL develop skills in spoken English that help them in activities such as applying for jobs. Learners in mathematics classes use their knowledge of ratio and proportion in cooking. Most learners gain the skills they need to help them improve their life chances.
- Learners feel safe and know how to report any concerns. They develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their families safe online. For example, in mathematics lessons, learners confidently discuss the rise in identity theft, and they use graphs well to display data. An international bank has delivered online safety workshops at community venues. Consequently, learners know how to stay safe when using social media and the internet.
- Learners develop a good understanding of British values and can apply them in their learning and lives. Learners listen respectfully to the views of others in class discussion and are confident to share their own point of view.
- Learners are aware of the risks associated with radicalisation and the dangers of extremist behaviour. For example, in a modern foreign language class, learners confidently engaged in animated discussion, in the language they are learning, about recent terrorist attacks and the 'Prevent' duty.
- Careers information, advice and guidance are highly effective. The number of careers staff has increased. Reception staff have initial advice and guidance qualifications. Learners receive careers advice before they enrol. This ensures that their course meets their career aspirations. Careers staff visit classes, and learners access an online 'career coach' service. Learners build skills and knowledge towards a 'passport to employability'. Careers staff work closely with teachers to ensure that learning focuses on career goals. Guest speakers, including former students, share career experiences. Consequently, learners develop wider skills and move onto higher-level courses, employment or volunteering.
- The standard of learners' work is high. Classes provide suitable challenge for the most able learners. Reading materials used in ESOL and modern foreign language lessons are challenging and complex. Peer assessment encourages learners to challenge each other to improve their work. In most cases, the detailed feedback on written work clearly

identifies where learners can improve their work and sets clear targets for improvement.

- Learners benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities that support their personal and social development. For example, ESOL learners take part in visits to local markets and the library. For many, this is the first time they have travelled by public transport. ESOL learners took part in a project, 'My View', where they submitted a photograph from their daily life and wrote about the image. This work will be published and exhibited in the library, which makes learners proud and has enhanced their self-esteem. ESOL learners participate in reading and conversation clubs to extend their skills outside class time.
- Most learners benefit from work-related activity in the curriculum. Managers have completed a detailed analysis of the provision to increase work-related activity. Learners participate in charity fundraising events where they apply skills of organisation, budgeting and costing to sell crafts and food. Learners who have achieved English GCSE and level 2 qualifications are now volunteers, supporting lower-level learners in classes. However, learners who have SEND do not develop independent living skills in their classes. Their opportunities for work experience are not yet fully developed throughout the provision.
- Managers have set a realistic attendance target. Current attendance is the same as previous years and continues to be slightly below the service's target. In ESOL-for-work classes, attendance is too low. Learners miss class time due to a range of external appointments. This disrupts learning and teaching. As a result of this, learners miss valuable learning time and they do not make progress as quickly as they might.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Since the previous inspection, managers have improved their monitoring of learners' destinations and progression. Based on a high return, more than four out of five learners on adult learning courses move on to a positive destination. Nearly half of learners moved on to another course within the service to develop and extend their skills. Most of those who left the service continued into sustained employment or volunteering.
- A high proportion of learners complete their qualification. Most learners are making at least the progress expected towards achieving their personal, social and qualification goals. Very few learners withdraw from their course and most who stay pass their course. Current learners continue to stay on their course. However, there are a few wards, such as Kingstanding and Longbridge, which have low staying-on rates.
- Achievement rates in seven of the 11 subject areas have improved in the last year. They have remained the same in one area and declined in three areas. The two subject areas of health and social care and education and training have low achievement rates.
- Most learners taking entry, level 1 and level 2 courses achieve their qualification. The small numbers of learners taking level 3 courses have low achievements. Learners taking ESOL courses have very high achievements. Learners taking certificates have low achievements.
- Learners taking functional skills qualifications in both English and mathematics have high achievements across all levels, apart from at entry level 1. A high proportion of learners taking GCSE mathematics and English achieve high grades.
- Leaders and managers monitor the performance of different groups effectively.

Historically, women have achieved better than men. Over the last three years, the achievement gap has narrowed. Similarly, learners who are in receipt of additional support have tended to achieve less well than other learners over the last three years. In the last year, the gap has narrowed slightly.

- Asian learners make up the largest ethnic group and are the highest achieving group. The achievement gap between Asian learners and Black learners has decreased slightly in the last three years. However, the gap between Asian learners and White learners has widened over the same period.
- The service continues to deliver pre-employment courses for a small number of unemployed adults. These programmes are highly tailored for well-known companies and enable learners to develop quickly the skills they need for employment. As a result, a high proportion of learners gain employment with their placement company.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50213
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16 to 18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	9993
Interim Principal	Ms Maria Gilling
Telephone number	0121 303 7627
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)	14	2,890	-	1,223	-	55	-	-
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:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the interim vice-principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and of 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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