

Inspection of Wolverhampton Adult Education Service

Inspection dates: 26–29 November 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
<hr/>	
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Information about this provider

Wolverhampton Adult Education Service provides adult learning programmes across the city, targeted specifically at those in deprived communities. At the time of the inspection, there were 788 learners on community learning programmes, 70 engaged in family learning, and 1,105 studying education and training programmes. The largest numbers are studying English programmes for speakers of other languages (ESOL), functional skills qualifications or British sign language. The service offers tailored programmes for adults with learning disabilities and those who need support to improve their mental health. Other provision includes programmes for art and design, digital skills, supporting teaching and learning in schools, business administration, and access to higher education. Nine learners aged between 16 and 18 are on education programmes for young people.

The service offers most programmes at two main sites in the centre of Wolverhampton. It also delivers family learning classes at 24 community sites across the city.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners receive high-quality information, advice and guidance. These enable them to make an informed choice from a broad range of courses to help equip them for their intended next steps.

Learners are respectful of each other and their cultural heritage. They work well together, listen to the views of others and confidently share their opinions within lessons. For example, ESOL learners discuss the difference between life in communist Albania and their experience of England.

Learners benefit from good teaching and well-resourced facilities within a calm, safe and positive learning environment. Consequently, learners enjoy their programmes and improve their confidence. For example, learners on art and design programmes build their resilience and feel more able to manage anxiety.

Learners benefit from extra help outside of their sessions. Staff quickly identify learners who need dyslexia and academic support. They support learners to attend additional sessions to improve their academic writing. As a result, learners become more independent during their programme.

Learners know how to keep themselves safe. This includes the secure use of online resources and social media. Learners use safe working practices when using knives in workshops. Where appropriate, they use the correct personal protective equipment.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have a well-informed understanding of city and regional priorities. They work extensively with their partners to develop a curriculum that closely meets these needs. For example, the curriculum offer includes a range of programmes to meet the need for English language support in the city. They also offer family learning courses to improve children's attainment and community cohesion.

Leaders and staff have a clear strategy for each of the strands of adult learning. This includes the development of skills for employment, preparing learners for further study, and engaging those from deprived communities in education. The clarity informs very thorough information, advice and guidance for learners. As a result, the vast majority of learners enrol on the right course to support their intended next steps. For example, learners studying British sign language have clear plans for what they want to do after their programme.

Most teachers plan and order the curriculum effectively. This enables learners to build the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to complete their programme. For example, learners on creative arts courses can confidently explain the different techniques they have used to produce their jewellery and other craft items. As a result, the large majority of learners pass their qualification and achieve their goals.

Staff provide a wide range of activities outside the requirements of the programmes to support the personal and social development of learners. Participation in community-based activities is high. For example, learners on ESOL programmes become volunteers in their local community to support others to improve their English language skills.

Most teachers use their subject expertise well to teach lessons that engage learners and deepen their understanding. Teachers use a wide variety of techniques to support learners to recall what they have learned. For example, each week, English teachers provide learners with 10 new words to use in sentences throughout the week, to improve their spelling. Teachers then test learners to ensure that they can remember the correct spellings.

Teachers know their learners very well. They skilfully provide the support individual learners need. As a result, learners make good progress towards their future goals. For example, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds can build their confidence and communication skills. They confidently present work to their peers and take part in controversial debates on topics such as knife crime.

Leaders give high priority to the health and well-being of both learners and staff. Learners receive useful guidance on healthy living and how to stay physically and mentally well. For example, learners on life-skills programmes record that they drink more water and fewer fizzy drinks. Leaders actively encourage staff to take up the opportunities provided to them for yoga and other craft-based leisure activities.

Leaders and managers have recently reviewed the careers education strategy at the service. They became aware that more learners would benefit from one-to-one careers guidance sessions and now employ a larger team of qualified advisers. As a result, many more learners can access and benefit from this specialist advice.

The advisory board and city council have a clear understanding of the curriculum and how this supports the current and future needs of the region. They challenge senior leaders on a range of performance measures and the extent to which the service meets the educational needs of the city. However, leaders do not provide enough information to allow the board to scrutinise and question the quality of teaching, training and assessment that learners receive.

A few teachers do not check learners' understanding well enough to measure accurately the development of learners' knowledge, skills and behaviours. A small minority of teachers move on to new topics without sufficiently checking learners' understanding. They do not amend their teaching as a result of what learners know and can do. For example, teachers record the progress of learners on 'like-minds' courses through a list of activities which does not capture the knowledge, skills and behaviours that learners develop.

A few learners do not attend their programmes regularly enough. Attendance is not consistently high across the service, and managers' and teachers' expectations for

this are not always clear. Managers are now taking action to improve attendance, but it is too early to see the impact of this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Managers have strong relationships with many city-wide agencies. They use these very well to develop appropriate policies and procedures to safeguard learners. Managers provide highly effective support for learners experiencing difficulties. They refer learners promptly for extra support when they need it.

Leaders rightly identify the need to increase learners' awareness of local risks, but it is too early to see the full impact of their recent actions.

Leaders adopt safe recruitment practices. They make appropriate checks to ensure that permanent and agency staff who work with learners are safe to do so.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers need to clearly communicate expectations for learners' attendance and put in place actions to raise the number of learners with high attendance.
- Leaders should provide the advisory board with a greater range of information about the quality of teaching, training and assessment to encourage further challenge about the quality of education that learners receive.
- Leaders and managers need to support teachers to improve their use of the information they gain from assessment activities, so that they can support learners better to identify what they need to do to improve.

Provider details

Unique reference number	55413
Address	Wolverhampton Adult Education Service Old Hall Street Wolverhampton WV1 3AU
Contact number	01902 558173
Website	www.aes.wolverhampton.gov.uk
Principal/CEO	Joanne Keatley
Provider type	Local authority
Date of previous inspection	8 December 2014
Main subcontractors	n/a

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the senior manager, curriculum and quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Andrea Shepherd, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rosy Belton	Ofsted Inspector
Lyn Bourne	Ofsted Inspector
Kay Hedges	Ofsted Inspector
Andrea Dill-Russell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019