

Short inspection of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Inspection dates:

4–5 February 2020

Outcome

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) is part of the council's regeneration and enterprise directorate. It offers 73 accredited and 397 community learning courses each year, taught in 59 community venues across the borough.

At the time of the inspection, approximately 550 learners were enrolled on a range of accredited and non-accredited courses, including health and well-being, functional skills English and mathematics, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and digital skills. In the previous academic year, a total of 2,976 learners studied with Dudley MBC (the service). It was last inspected in March 2016.

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

Learners enjoy their courses. They are enthusiastic in their learning sessions. They collaborate well and recognise the progress they are making. Learners are particularly pleased with how they have grown in confidence during their courses – and rightly so. They can point to the skills they have developed as a result of their participation in interesting but challenging activities.

Learners receive effective personal support from tutors. In class, tutors establish a safe and cooperative learning environment which puts learners at ease. This enables learners to take measured risks and develop resilience and character. As a result, their well-being is significantly improved. Learners feel safe.

Learners receive clear information, advice and guidance about their next steps. The vast majority of learners go on to another course within the service, mostly at a more demanding level. A significant number move into higher-level courses provided by the service's college partners.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear strategic vision for each strand of the service's curriculum delivery. The health and well-being curriculum is clearly focused on those learners furthest from employment. The skills curriculum provides accredited courses. Both strands meet local, regional and funding-body priorities.

The service offers a wide range of attractive courses, such as painting and drawing, mindfulness and Pilates. In family learning, learners benefit from learning in their local communities, where they feel safe to take those first steps back into education. The service is exceptionally successful at engaging learners who are new to education.

Tutors organise and order the curriculum well to ensure that learners move from easy to more complex and challenging tasks. This enables them to develop their knowledge and skills, including personal and social skills. For example, a sewing programme covers health and safety before learners are introduced to threading a sewing machine.

Tutors are exceptionally well qualified and experienced in most subject areas. Learners benefit from art tutors who are practising artists and sewing tutors who have extensive experience of upholstery. However, a few tutors for ESOL learners are not specialist language tutors.

In the health and well-being curriculum strand, teaching is well paced, with clear expositions at the start of sessions. Activities present the right level of challenge. Where there is a wide disparity in learners' starting points, tutors recognise this by agreeing tasks of varying difficulty. Tutors ensure that learners have frequent opportunities to practise, and thus develop, their skills. As a result, learners' work shows clear evidence of skills development.

In the skills curriculum, tutors create a safe and productive learning environment. Learners develop their skills in English and mathematics well. As a result, they now use spelling and punctuation more confidently in their everyday lives. For example, one learner is now able to fill in forms, which he was unable to do previously.

In a few lessons, tutors do not use effective assessment strategies. Too often, tutors do not check learners' understanding fully before moving on to the next activity. As a result, a few learners cannot recall what they have previously learned.

A few ESOL learners struggle in functional skills lessons due to their lack of basic English skills. Tutors do not always have the specialist skills to develop the language of ESOL learners. As a result, they fall behind or disengage in lessons.

Governance arrangements have been strengthened since the previous inspection. The board provides a strong strategic steer to senior leaders. This has enabled them to adapt provision to the changing priorities of the council and other regional

bodies. Governors receive enough information to provide appropriate challenge to senior leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

As leaders target some of the most vulnerable adult learners in the borough, they give safeguarding the high priority it deserves. Policies are comprehensive and recently updated. Designated officers are in place. All staff have received recent and relevant training in safeguarding. Managers have dealt with the few reported incidents swiftly and appropriately.

Managers have good links with external bodies. They keep staff informed about local issues, such as gangs and far-right extremism. Nevertheless, learners' awareness of how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremism is too variable.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that the curriculum for ESOL learners is tailored to meet their specific needs.
- Managers should ensure that all staff receive training to make assessment consistently good across all provision to help learners remember what they have learned.
- Leaders and managers should ensure the further and consistent development of learners' awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50218
Address	The Council House Priory Road Dudley DY1 1HF
Contact number	01384 813 975
Website	dudley.gov.uk
Principal/CEO	Ms Viv Webb
Provider type	Community learning and skills
Date of previous inspection	9 March 2016
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council was judged to be good in March 2016.

The inspection team was assisted by the quality improvement manager, 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 observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

William Baidoe-Ansah, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clive Blanchette	Ofsted Inspector
Gillian Forrester	Ofsted Inspector

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