

Inspection of Slough Borough Council

Inspection dates:

9 to 12 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Adult learning programmes

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Slough Borough Council (SBC) provides adult community learning to adults in Slough and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Learners access courses in venues which are in their own communities. The aim of the provision is to improve residents' employability and quality of life.

At the time of the inspection, there were 265 learners studying a range of courses from pre-entry level to level 2. Most learners study English for speakers of other languages, English, mathematics and digital skills. SBC currently work with four subcontractors that deliver courses in family learning, personal development, entry-level media skills and community interpreting.

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

Learners benefit from a calm and friendly learning environment which encourages a culture of support and tolerance. Learners have high levels of respect for each other. They share willingly their previous difficult life experiences and are extremely accepting of diversity among their peers and in the community.

Learners' attitudes to learning are very positive, and their commitment is consistently high. They attend their courses well in most cases and are on time. Learners are curious and keen to learn more. They support each other well by sharing their learning and helping each other to understand key points.

Learners gain confidence and resilience on the courses they attend. For example, learners on digital skills courses had a fear of using computers prior to joining the course. Tutors supported these learners to dispel any misconceptions, and they gently encourage them to use computers independently.

Learners rightly value the staff and the teaching that tutors provide. All staff support learners well, and they ensure that learners join the right course. Learners understand how the courses will benefit them. For example, learners can communicate more confidently, their well-being is improved, and they are better prepared for work or further learning.

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

Leaders and managers work collaboratively with their community to ensure that the education provided meets the needs of the local residents and the borough council's economic plan. They have strong links with job centres, employment and skills groups, community cohesion groups and local employers. For example, the local football club identified a need for volunteers at events, and SBC have developed a course for volunteers to learn about spectator safety.

Leaders and managers are ambitious for their learners. They plan the courses to ensure that they link to meaningful progression opportunities. For example, managers work closely with local social care providers to ensure that learners gain the right level of spoken English needed to gain work in the industry.

Tutors are well qualified and skilled in teaching. They have benefited from useful training to help them and their learners identify the purpose of their learning and what it will prepare them for. Tutors now use teaching techniques successfully. For example, they develop the use of language in different situations, build skills over time, and use games and debates effectively in order to help learners to learn more and remember more.

Tutors support learners well to identify how the course can help them. They take the time to adapt their teaching to ensure that learners are able to use their learning

effectively. For example, tutors repeat lessons if learners struggle with any key concepts so that learners can remember their learning and use it competently.

Learners develop a range of new knowledge, skills and behaviours which help them to move closer to employment or enrich their lives. For example, English functional skills learners can confidently communicate in formal and informal situations, such as speaking with their children's teachers at school.

Managers and tutors promote citizenship activities which prepare learners for life in modern Britain. Learners develop their understanding of equality through learning about fundamental British values and how they can contribute to their community. For example, they have learned about environmental issues, child exploitation and slavery.

Tutors use a good range of useful strategies to assess learning and plan additional tasks. They check learners' understanding through highly effective questioning, discussions and written work. For example, in English, tutors ask learners what they have learned from an activity, how the learners will apply this learning and what they will do next. Most tutors provide most learners with useful feedback, which helps them to improve.

Tutors at Thrive 365 develop learners' confidence on their personal development course. They focus learners on their strengths, transferrable skills and the positive aspects of their lives. For example, because of their improved confidence and self-esteem, some learners have completed a mentoring course which enabled them to volunteer at a local clinic that supports people who have addictions.

Leaders and managers use well-planned activities to quality assure the courses, such as classroom walks, progress monitoring and scrutiny of data. As a result, they have a good understanding of the strengths of the provision and the improvements needed. Leaders use the knowledge they gain to plan relevant and effective training for staff.

Governors bring a wealth of knowledge, experience and links with the community and local authority to the provision. They support and scrutinise senior leaders to improve the learners' experience and to meet the needs of employers, community groups and residents.

Leaders do not focus the actions they take to improve the provision on the impact they will have on the learner. They do not know enough about how the courses support learners to make progress towards their goals. As a result, there are inconsistencies in how tutors teach courses and the support they give to learners. For example, some tutors do not use the 'Progress and progression' booklets to consistently track the progress of their learners.

Leaders maintain oversight of the sub-contracted provision, but this is inconsistent. As a result, they do not know the quality of the education that all the learners

experience. Some sub-contractors receive regular and thorough scrutiny, whereas others receive very little scrutiny and are left for long periods of time unchecked.

Leaders and managers do not plan careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) well enough. Learners who are proactive in seeking CIAG receive useful information about what they need to do to move towards their goals. However, staff do not ensure that all learners are offered individual careers information, advice and guidance. For example, some learners who had requested information about becoming teaching assistants had received useful CIAG. However, learners in the same group had not received this information but were also interested in this career.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Learners feel very safe in the community venues and while learning online. They know how to report concerns and are very aware of the types of risks to their own safety, both online and in the community.

Leaders and managers have established effective links with local authority safeguarding teams, external partners and community leaders which help them to keep up to date with local issues. Tutors have an excellent knowledge of these topics and teach them through relevant discussions with their learners.

Leaders keep detailed records of safeguarding incidents which provide information about the actions they have taken, the subsequent resolution or referral and the lessons they have learned to improve ongoing practice.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that all learners benefit from individual careers information advice and guidance so that they are able to prepare well for their next steps.
- Leaders should ensure that their quality assurance processes and their actions to improve focus on the impact that the provision is having on learners' ability to achieve their goals.
- Leaders should ensure that they maintain consistently efficient levels of oversight of all sub-contracted provision so that they know that all learners experience high-quality teaching and learning.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54429
Address	Observatory House 25 Windsor Rd Slough SL1 2EL
Contact number	01753 476 611
Website	www.slough.gov.uk/communitylearning
Principal/CEO	Baljit Mann
Provider type	Local authority
Dates of previous inspection	16 to 19 January 2018
Main subcontractors	Thrive 365 Achieving for Children Resource Media Productions Building Futures Together

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the curriculum 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 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

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