

Short inspection of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 November 2021

Outcome

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council manages its community learning and skills provision within the council's adult and community learning department (the service). The service offers a range of accredited and non-accredited short courses, funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

At the time of the inspection, there were 207 adult learners studying community learning and skills courses. The large majority study courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and digital skills and information and communication technology (ICT). Most of the current learners study entry level courses. The remaining learners follow courses at level 1 and level 2. Learning mostly takes place in two local community learning centres.

At their previous inspection in November 2015, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council was judged to be a good provider.

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

Learners are motivated to achieve their goals and improve their lives. They enjoy their programmes and are proud of the progress they make.

Learners develop the skills they need to be successful in work and in life. Learners on safeguarding courses learn how to accurately identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and report concerns. Level 2 health and social care learners learn about ethical issues in health care and relevant legislation so that they can skilfully care for people.

Learners improve their confidence, independence and self-esteem as a result of their courses. ESOL learners gain confidence to speak with their children's teachers, make medical appointments and arrange household repairs with tradespeople.

Learners value the support they get from staff. They receive individual coaching to help them catch up if they have fallen behind. Learners who need additional support in class receive effective help from learning support workers.

Learners feel safe. Learners on ESOL and support working in schools courses know how to keep themselves safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. However, a minority of learners on other courses cannot recall previous learning on safeguarding or the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

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

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is a good provider. Leaders have a clear strategy to improve the work prospects and well-being of people and their communities. They empower communities to work together to create positive futures. Learners develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to move into employment, further study or play a productive role in their communities.

Leaders adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of learners and local skills gaps. Leaders introduced a 'long-COVID' peer support course in response to local need. As a result of attending this course, learners have improved their mental health and a few learners feel ready to look for work. Leaders recently introduced a level 2 health and social care course to meet local employers' needs.

Curriculum leaders and tutors plan teaching in a logical order so that learners build their knowledge and skills over the duration of their course. Learners on entry level ESOL courses develop their speaking and listening skills by learning how to say and write the letters of the alphabet before writing short sentences. They then move on to reading more complex information such as a job advert or a menu. Learners on level 2 support working in schools courses learn about child development and how to recognise and respond to developmental concerns. This helps them to successfully support teachers and pupils in the classroom.

Leaders do not assure the quality of education that learners receive well enough. Observers do not routinely focus on the relevant aspects of teaching skills. For example, how well tutors teach key concepts to learners. This means that tutors do not know what they need to do to improve their teaching skills further.

Most tutors do not set clear targets within learners' individual learning plans. This means that a few learners do not achieve their personal targets quickly enough.

Learners benefit from effective initial careers advice and guidance. Tutors use an initial assessment to assess learners' starting points which means they are enrolled on the correct level of course. Tutors and National Careers Service staff offer impartial careers information, advice and guidance to learners. They routinely direct learners into employment, further learning or other support services.

Senior leaders and managers have successfully improved the weaknesses identified at their last inspection. For example, elected members receive improved information on the quality of education. Elected members know their provision well. They routinely challenge leaders to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of their local communities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff promote a supportive culture of safeguarding and protection within their organisation. They make prompt and appropriate referrals where necessary. Leaders work closely with an extensive range of partners in the local authority and external organisations to keep learners safe.

Leaders complete a range of appropriate checks when appointing new staff to make sure they are suitable to work with learners. All staff, including the safeguarding team receive appropriate training.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that they identify accurately how tutors can develop their teaching skills further, and support tutors to achieve this.
- Leaders should ensure that tutors set clear targets on learners' individual learning plans to ensure that learners achieve their personal targets swiftly.
- Leaders should support tutors to routinely check learners' understanding of safeguarding, radicalisation and extremism, so that learners know how to keep themselves, and others, safe.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50732
Address	Adult & Community Learning Room 420 Old Town Hall King William Street Blackburn Lancashire BB1 1DY
Contact number	01254 222124
Website	www.blackburn.gov.uk/schools-and-education/adult-learning
Head of service	Richard Brown
Provider type	Local Authority
Date of previous inspection	15 and 16 October 2015
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council was judged to be good in October 2015.

The inspection team was assisted by the service lead – adult learning and employment support, 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

Kim Bleasdale, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Suzanne Horner	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Alastair Mollon	Her Majesty’s 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 2021