

Inspection of Surrey County Council

Inspection dates: 10 to 13 May 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Surrey Adult Learning (SAL) is a community learning and skills provider that also offers apprenticeships for Surrey County Council (SCC) staff and the local fire service. SAL provides access to education for residents of the local authority. It provides courses that support residents towards employment and further or higher education, as well as a range of courses that improve health and well-being or enable learners to gain a new skill, for example in a modern foreign language.

SAL offers apprenticeship standards at level 3 in operational firefighter, customer service, business administration, teaching assistant and team leader/supervisor, and at level 5, coaching professional and operations manager.

At the time of the inspection, 3,339 learners and apprentices were on programme, 97 of whom were apprentices.

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

Learners and apprentices benefit from learning in calm and purposeful study environments that teachers and staff carefully create and maintain. Learners and apprentices understand well the clear expectations that staff set to ensure that the environment is conducive to study. For example, in supported learning, learners decide, with the support of staff, their ground rules and support each other to stick to these rules throughout the course. Teachers teaching in virtual environments expertly use the tools available to them to ensure high-quality training, such as break-out rooms for learners and apprentices to practise their learning or discuss topics in more detail.

Teachers and support staff work well together. They carefully identify learners or apprentices who need support and put in place effective strategies to ensure that all learners and apprentices build their skills over time. For example, support staff prompt learners well to remember prior learning, and support them to put their thoughts into their written work.

Learners and apprentices enjoy their learning. They participate in lessons and discussions with staff with enthusiasm. Most learners and apprentices gain confidence and social and communication skills and reduce social isolation as a result of the programmes they attend. A minority of learners and apprentices enjoy taking part in additional activities to further develop their knowledge and skills. For example, photography learners exhibit their work in competitions and learners in supported learning sell their arts and crafts to raise money for charities.

Apprentices benefit from very supportive employers who help them to develop their skills, knowledge and behaviours at work. Employers work closely with SAL staff to ensure that apprentices' programmes are tailored to their roles and that they can extend their learning beyond the curriculum. For example, an apprentice working in the 'blue badge' team at SCC benefited from training in working with customers with autism spectrum disorder.

Learners and apprentices feel safe when they are in learning. They know whom to contact if they have any concerns about themselves or others. Apprentices know how to stay safe when at work and are aware of signs of extremism and radicalisation.

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

Leaders have adopted and developed a curriculum that is ambitious in providing access to education, and improving social inclusion, mental well-being and confidence. Apprentices and learners studying qualifications also benefit from a well-developed curriculum that improves their employment prospects and prepares them for life and work.

Teachers and staff sequence the curriculum in a sensible order, so that learners and apprentices learn logically. They progressively develop learners' and apprentices' new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Staff lay strong foundations for learners and apprentices to build on by introducing basic elements of new topics or concepts initially. They support learners and apprentices to practise these until they are secure and then build more complex learning through a scaffolded approach. For example, in lipreading, learners learn a new lip shape during each session. The teacher then helps them to build on this by using it in different words, phrases and sentences, as well as with different speakers, helping learners to become more fluent and familiar with the lip shape.

Suitably qualified and experienced staff provide clear explanations that help learners and apprentices to understand key topics. They use strategies such as repetition and practice in different contexts and situations to help learners and apprentices know more and remember more over time. For example, in supported learning, when learning about different monarchs in the UK, learners are supported to link this back to their previous topic of transport and to identify which mode of transport was used with which monarch.

Teachers and staff use assessment effectively to identify learners' and apprentices' starting points and throughout the courses to ensure they can plan accordingly for the further development of new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Staff identify gaps in learning expertly and help learners and apprentices to widen their knowledge so that they continue to progress. For example, in English, teachers recognised that learners were struggling with time pressures in mock exams and provided learners with strategies to manage this.

Most learners and apprentices benefit from useful, developmental feedback, which they use to improve their work further. For example, teachers of GCSE and functional skills English help learners to identify how to make their writing more formal to achieve higher grades or marks in their exams and to communicate well in formal situations.

Leaders and managers work well with their subcontractor to ensure that the quality of the provision is good. They have developed a highly appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of families whose children are at risk of substance misuse.

Governance is effective. Governors know the provision well and leaders have worked to ensure that they have governors who have the right skills and experiences to properly support them. For example, they have recently recruited a headteacher from a school in a deprived ward so that they can gain knowledge of the skills needs of residents in these areas.

Leaders have established well-understood and meaningful processes for evaluating the quality of the provision. By drawing together a variety of evidence sources such as data, lesson visit reports and learner and apprentice feedback, they accurately identify strengths and areas for improvement. Although this process is replicated at

team level, the accuracy is varied and managers cannot always identify the specific actions they need to take to make the improvements.

Although apprentices and learners have access to an online tool that provides careers information, they do not routinely benefit from impartial, individualised careers information, advice and guidance. As a result, learners and apprentices do not know what opportunities are available to them or how to prepare for their next steps.

Leaders are still in the process of ensuring that all of their provision meets local skills gaps. While leaders have made progress in meeting the needs of many adult learners and apprentices, very few of these come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds or areas of deprivation.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have appropriate policies and procedures in place to meet their statutory responsibilities. The designated safeguarding lead and staff are very well trained and keep their knowledge up to date. Learners and apprentices know whom to speak to should they have a concern and are confident that they would be listened to.

Learners and apprentices develop a good understanding of a range of potential risks to their safety, such as domestic violence, mental ill health, harassment and risks at work.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that evaluation of the provision is consistent at all levels and that managers and staff identify clearly the specific actions they need to take to make the improvements.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that all learners and apprentices benefit from impartial, individualised careers information, advice and guidance.
- Leaders should ensure that they refocus their allocation of public funding to meet the needs of those who are disadvantaged, vulnerable and least likely to participate in education to meet the requirements of adult learning provision.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54684
Address	Woking Adult Learning Centre Bonsey Lane Woking Surrey GU22 9PE
Contact number	01483 519459
Website	www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/adult-learning
Principal	Francis Lawlor
Provider type	Local authority
Date of previous inspection	10 and 11 May 2016
Main subcontractors	Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal and designated safeguarding lead, 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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