

Inspection of Westminster City Council

Inspection dates: 21 to 24 June 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Information about this provider

Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) is in the division of growth, planning and housing within Westminster City Council. WAES runs adult learning programmes for those living in the borough and from neighbouring boroughs. The provision is located in three main centres in the borough and up to 80 venues in the local community. WAES teaches a small amount of provision through subcontracting and partnership arrangements. WAES offers accredited and non-accredited courses to approximately 5,000 learners annually.

The majority of learners study courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and English or mathematics. The remainder study a range of vocational courses, including creative and visual arts, hairdressing, childcare, and the digital and accounting industries. Around 100 learners follow courses for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. At the time of the inspection, WAES provided training for 21 levy-funded apprentices. Of these, 14 study on the library information and archive services apprenticeship at level 3. The remainder study customer service and outdoor activity leadership.

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

Learners enjoy their courses at local centres across the borough. Where lessons are taught face to face, learners enjoy meeting new people, as this helps improve their well-being. ESOL learners like using their newly acquired English skills with their peers.

Learners feel very welcome wherever they learn. Teachers are very helpful. Learners can approach their teachers if they are struggling with their studies. Teachers answer learners' queries promptly, including by phone and e-mail. Learners enjoy the friendly environment and feel part of a community. They describe attending WAES as like being part of a family. Learners say they would highly recommend courses at WAES to their friends.

Learners greatly value attending centres that are well resourced. For example, they learn craft skills using high-quality kilns, potters' wheels and specialist tools and equipment.

Learners are highly motivated to learn. For example, ESOL learners have a positive attitude towards learning English. They appreciate the way that their improved use of English helps them in both their careers and personal lives.

Learners respect each other's views. They listen carefully to each other. They encourage and support each other in their studies. They enjoy meeting people from different backgrounds and cultures and learning about each other. For example, they like the sessions where they share food from each other's home countries at the end of term.

Learners and apprentices cooperate and work together very well. For example, library service apprentices share their research findings and resources. They highlight interesting podcasts and videos they find at work or when writing assignments.

Teachers have very high expectations of learners' attendance and punctuality. Teachers frequently highlight the importance of this as a key behaviour and skill for employment. As a result, learners attend very well.

Teachers provide helpful digital skills support to learners with a learning disability or difficulty and their parents and carers. This helps them to assist learners with their learning at home.

Learners feel safe and centres are safe places to study. Staff are visible around the centres, and learners know who to discuss concerns with. They say that any concerns they have would be acted on by staff.

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

Leaders and managers ensure that the curriculum reflects local and regional priorities. The range of courses they offer meets a wide range of needs in the local community and beyond. For example, the large ESOL programme supports newly arrived refugees to develop their English skills well as they adjust to life in the UK. Leaders plan vocational courses and apprenticeships that provide clear pathways for those seeking employment to develop the skills and knowledge they need to move towards the job market.

In most instances, teachers plan to teach their subjects very effectively. They carefully consider the order in which they teach learners the knowledge and skills they need to achieve their learning goals. As a result, teaching builds learners' skills and knowledge incrementally over time. For example, learners studying accounting initially learn bookkeeping conventions and how to analyse balance sheets, before moving on to bookkeeping controls, elements of costings and use of accounting software.

Teachers ensure that learners and apprentices gain the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to progress. For example, on childcare courses teachers clearly explain the key pieces of early years legislation. They use examples from their experience in the industry to assist learners to remember what they are taught.

Apprentices in library, information and archive services develop the behaviours they need in their careers. For example, they are aware of the sensitivity of the information they work with, and the permissions they need to access documents. Most learners achieve their qualifications and move on to further learning or employment.

In most subjects, teachers give feedback to learners on their work, which helps them improve the standard of work they produce. However, this is not consistent across all subjects. For example, on early years courses and on courses for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, teachers do not consistently correct grammatical or spelling errors in learners' written work. As a result, some learners are slow to develop their written English skills.

Most teachers check effectively that learners remember what they have been taught. However, this varies depending on the subject. For example, in too many ESOL courses, teachers do not use questioning techniques well enough to check that learners understand key concepts. Sometimes, teachers rush through the questions they ask learners. As a result, they do not know what learners have understood.

On too many ESOL courses, teachers do not consistently discuss with learners how well they have achieved their learning goals. Consequently, a few learners are not clear about what language skills they need to practise or how they have improved.

Leaders and managers ensure that they promote a wide range of additional activities for learners, such as trips to museums and galleries, and family activities. Staff ensure that learners' success is recognised and celebrated through award ceremonies and graduation events. These enrich learners' experience at WAES, as learners take pride in their achievements.

Most learners studying vocational subjects receive effective careers advice. For example, learners receive individual guidance and support on how to write a curriculum vitae. Staff put on termly careers events, which have a good range of workshops in which a growing number of learners participate. However, not all vocational learners are aware of the opportunities available to them.

Learners develop a very good understanding of British values. For example, hair and beauty learners understand the importance of treating all clients with respect. Learners studying childcare understand the importance of preparing children for life in modern Britain. However, too many learners are unable to remember what they have been informed about the dangers of radicalisation and extremist views.

Leaders and managers have effective oversight of the provision. They take effective action to make improvements where needed. For example, they have increased the support and training available for learners through employing digital ambassadors and broadening the digital curriculum offer.

Leaders and managers have suitable arrangements in place to monitor the quality and effectiveness of subcontracted provision. For example, they hold monthly meetings with sub-contractors and review the quality of education that learners receive.

Leaders and managers support teachers effectively in order to develop their skills, including those new to the profession. They use information on the quality of teaching to plan staff training and development so that teachers improve their classroom practice.

Governors have effective oversight of the provision. Governors have very relevant experience for their roles and are proactive in their duties. For example, they meet learners to hear directly their views on the provision. They are well informed of the performance of the service because they scrutinise performance information that leaders and managers provide.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders, managers and staff promote a strong safeguarding culture throughout the provision. They have effective oversight of safeguarding arrangements because they frequently collect and analyse information about the safeguarding and welfare issues affecting their learners.

Staff act promptly and effectively to safeguard learners and protect their welfare. They liaise well with outside agencies to ensure that learners get the support and help they need. For example, staff work with a charity that provides free counselling support to learners. As a result, learners receive effective support that allows most of them to complete their studies.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that teachers on all programmes consistently check that learners remember what they have been taught.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that teachers on all programmes give effective feedback and targets so that all learners know how to improve.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that learners are effectively informed and have good recall of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

Provider details

Unique reference number	55353
Address	Adult Education Service 219 Lisson Grove London NW8 8LW
Contact number	020 7641 8130; 020 7641 8121
Website	www.waes.ac.uk
Principal	Arinola Edeh
Provider type	Local authority
Dates of previous inspection	15 to 18 March 2016
Main subcontractors	Adult Education Employment & Training Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant principal 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

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