

Inspection of Barking and Dagenham College

Inspection dates: 18 to 21 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Education programmes for young people	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Barking and Dagenham College (BDC) is a general further education college situated in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Rush Green is the college's main campus where the majority of programmes are taught. The college delivers provision at three centres in Barking: The Technical Skills Academy, The Broadway Theatre and The Barking Learning Centre.

BDC provides English and mathematics education and training to adult learners across five community bases in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. A substantial proportion of the adult provision is English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

At the time of the inspection, there were 5,243 learners enrolled at the college. There were 2,495 learners on education programmes for young people and 2,342 on adult learning programmes.

BDC provides standards-based apprenticeship programmes from levels 2 to 5 for 406 apprentices of all ages. A large proportion of apprentices complete their studies at level 3 in installation electrician, plumbing and electrotechnical trades.

There were 369 learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who have education, health and care (EHC) plans and are in receipt of high-needs funding. Of these, 179 learners study in the discrete high-needs provision (Horizons), 22 are on supported internship programmes and the remainder of learners are on vocational programmes across the college.

BDC works with three subcontractors to deliver education and training to adult learners. There were approximately 715 adult learners on English, mathematics, health and social care, and construction programmes.

BDC has alternative provision for home-educated learners aged 14 to 16 years. At the time of the inspection, there were 16 learners based at the Rush Green campus.

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

The quality of education that young learners, including those with high needs, experience varies considerably depending on the campus they attend and the programme they study. Leaders do not ensure that young learners across campuses and programmes are consistently taught a challenging and ambitious curriculum. As a result, too few learners achieve their assessments and planned learning goals.

The quality of education that apprentices receive varies too much depending on the course they are on. Those on programmes such as pharmacy, human resources and plumbing have a positive experience. They gain highly relevant knowledge and skills that they apply at work. However, apprentices on other programmes, including rail technician, network cabling, maintenance operations and site management at level 3, have experienced significant disruption to their training. These apprentices do not value or recall their learning. They have not had sufficient support to prepare them for their final assessments. As a result, they are concerned about their future and whether they will complete their programme.

Adult learners benefit from a broad curriculum that meets their needs and addresses skills gaps locally and across London. This includes courses to meet the needs of the construction, health and social care, nursing, digital and creative industries. As a result, adult learners develop good skills and knowledge and achieve their learning goals for their chosen next steps.

Learners' attendance and punctuality to lessons are not good enough. Staff do not consistently set high expectations of attendance and punctuality across the college. Consequently, attendance varies considerably between programmes and campuses.

When learners and apprentices attend college, they have a positive attitude to their studies. They are taught in high-quality and often industry-standard spaces, such as a film studio, gaming room and science laboratories. Learners with high needs in the discrete provision learn in a specialist building that is fully accessible to young people with physical disabilities.

Most learners and apprentices benefit from learning in an inclusive environment. The college campuses are calm. Most learners, including apprentices and those with SEND, treat their peers and staff with respect. The majority of learners and apprentices whom inspectors spoke with, including those with SEND, feel safe at college and at work. Apprentices say that their workplaces are positive environments in which to work. Those working with tools and on sites in industry understand the importance of safe working practices.

Most learners know about the different career pathways and opportunities available to them. This is because staff provide helpful careers advice and guidance. However, the quality of the impartial careers advice that apprentices receive is not good enough. Too many apprentices are unclear about their next steps and the opportunities available to them.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is focused well on five key sectors in digital, creative arts, health and social care, construction and electrical installations. These sector areas are aligned well to the skills priorities for the college's region and locality. Leaders have taken suitable action to develop their curriculum offer and put in place appropriate resources. For example, they are working with large employers to install green renewable hubs at the Rush Green campus in response to the government's skills for a green economy agenda.

The vast majority of the college's stakeholders consider BDC a key strategic partner that helps shape, advise and deliver on their strategic plans. They greatly value the input and insight they receive from BDC. For example, BDC worked effectively with the Department for Work and Pensions to provide sector-based work academy pre-employment training programmes in civil service, warehousing and teaching assistants. These gave local people who were furthest from the job market the skills they needed to gain work in such sectors.

Leaders work well with employers and other key stakeholders at a strategic level to identify a suitable curriculum offer. However, leaders do not consistently involve employers and other relevant stakeholders in the design and implementation of the curriculum. For example, they do not involve employers enough in helping to shape the curriculum content, so that the knowledge and skills that learners and apprentices are taught match closely to current and emerging skills needs. In some subjects, lack of work experience at employers hinders learners' application of their knowledge in the workplace.

Leaders have established a number of mutually beneficial partnerships with key stakeholders across priority skill sectors. The vast majority of stakeholders report that they have effective communication with leaders at the college. As a result, they identify opportunities to collaborate on various local and regional initiatives. For example, BDC collaborates with the Institute of Technology to develop education and training programmes across a range of science, technology, engineering and mathematics occupations and industries where there are skills gaps.

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

In recent years, leaders have struggled to recruit and retain teachers, managers and support staff. There are too many curriculum areas without sufficient staff. This causes considerable disruption to learners' and apprentices' education. In a number of areas, such as in the discrete provision for learners with high needs (Horizons), leaders have been unable to secure consistent management. Staff continue to work diligently, but do not have adequate support and guidance to do their work effectively enough. A high number of staff feel the negative impact on their

workload and well-being where there are vacant posts, as it places an additional burden on them.

Leaders and governors do not have sufficient oversight of the quality of education that learners and apprentices receive. Leaders do not ensure that underperforming curriculum areas improve quickly enough. As a result, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of education and training across subjects.

Tutors are appropriately skilled and knowledgeable in their subject areas. They bring their own experience of industry to share with learners and apprentices. For example, those teaching apprentices in human resources and pharmacy have significant experience and continue to work in their sector. Tutors use their expertise effectively in their teaching.

Tutors ensure that many young and adult learners benefit from a curriculum that is designed logically. Tutors sequence content so that most learners build on their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time, so that they are able to complete more complex tasks. For example, in business, learners develop initial knowledge about fundamental concepts, such as how external factors have an impact on how a business operates, before moving on to more specialist areas such as marketing. However, in a few areas, including motor vehicle and Horizons, tutors do not sequence important content in a logical order to enable learners to develop the skills and knowledge needed to achieve their learning goals.

Leaders do not have accurate oversight of the progress that learners with high needs on Horizons and supported internship programmes make. This is because tutors do not identify and record well enough what learners can do at the start of programmes. Too often, the targets that staff set with learners are too vague. This results in learners finding these targets unhelpful. Staff do not link learners' targets adequately to each learner's EHC plan outcomes. As a result, they do not have a secure overview of the progress learners make towards their starting points and planned outcomes.

Leaders do not ensure that learners with high needs receive the specialist input they require, as outlined in their EHC plans, such as speech and language therapy. Staff do not plan and deliver support that enables learners to make progress in key areas such as communication. As a result, learners' individual needs are not fully met.

Learners with high needs receive good support from learning support assistants (LSAs) in lessons. LSAs have a strong understanding of effective strategies to support learners with a wide range of SEND. They work well with learners to promote and build independence. As a result, learners become increasingly able to self-advocate and make choices for themselves.

Leaders do not ensure that staff across all apprenticeship programmes structure and teach the curriculum effectively. On too many programmes, apprentices do not receive frequent enough progress reviews. Employers are not consistently involved in apprentices' progress reviews. Leaders do not keep employers and apprentices

sufficiently up to date on their plans when there are significant staffing issues. As a result, apprentices on programmes such as rail technician and network cabling make slow progress.

Across the types of provision, tutors are inconsistent in how effective they are at assessing learners. On adult learning programmes and apprenticeships, tutors check learners' and apprentices' knowledge effectively through skilful use of targeted questions and quizzes. This helps tutors to identify gaps in learners' and apprentices' understanding. However, on programmes for young learners and those with high needs, this is not as effective. Too often, tutors introduce new topics before learners have a secure understanding of previous content. Tutors are not skilled enough at identifying gaps and misconceptions in learners' understanding.

On programmes for young learners, learners with high needs and apprenticeships, tutors do not consistently use information they have about what learners know and can do at the start of programmes in order to plan what they teach. They do not adjust what they teach to meet the needs of individual learners and apprentices.

Leaders do not ensure that tutors consistently provide helpful feedback to learners on their work. In the stronger areas, tutors provide helpful feedback and show learners misconceptions in their work. Learners use this feedback to make improvements. For example, in mathematics, learners receive feedback when they have incorrectly applied a method for a calculation. However, tutors across subjects are not consistently skilled at giving feedback to help learners and apprentices. Too often, apprentices do not receive timely feedback on their work and reflective logs.

Leaders offer staff a range of professional development opportunities. However, these do not consistently focus on the areas of tutor teaching practice that staff need to improve the most. Tutors have limited opportunities to develop the quality of their teaching and assessment practices. This impacts on the quality of education that learners and apprentices receive.

Leaders do not ensure that learners have opportunities to develop and discover their personal interests and talents sufficiently. Too many learners and apprentices do not have access to a broad curriculum beyond the technical and vocational aspects of their programme.

The majority of learners and apprentices understand how to live healthy lives. However, across the provision types, there is a lack of consistency in the topics that tutors teach. Leaders do not ensure that tutors deliver an effective enough tutorial programme. For example, learners and apprentices receive training through an online course about healthy relationships at the start of their programme. However, leaders do not plan opportunities for tutors so they can check learners' understanding and knowledge of this topic.

Too many learners and apprentices do not have a secure understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. This is because leaders do not ensure that there is an effective programme in place to teach learners and apprentices

about these topics. As a result, they do not understand well enough how radicalisation and extremist views are relevant to them at work, college or in their community.

Leaders do not work well enough with subcontractors to plan and teach programmes. Leaders do not have detailed oversight of the quality of education that learners in the subcontracted provision receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that learners receive effective support and guidance from suitably trained designated safeguarding leads (DSLs). DSLs refer learners for appropriate support to services such as those for drugs and alcohol misuse, counselling and college support advisers. For example, learners who require support with managing anxiety receive helpful support from college support advisers, who develop anxiety management plans with learners. This helps learners remain engaged with their studies.

Leaders have in place suitable arrangements for young learners aged 14 to 16 to ensure that they are safe and supported at college. Leaders and managers monitor learners frequently and increase support to them when risks increase. For example, they liaise with parents and carers and external agencies such as social workers to ensure that learners get the support they need to stay safe.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and governors must ensure that across all programmes, learners and apprentices benefit from high-quality teaching, so that they develop significant new knowledge and skills and achieve their assessments and learning goals.
- Leaders must develop a curriculum for learners with high needs on Horizons and supported internship programmes that reflects learners' individual needs, so that learners gain the knowledge and skills they need to achieve their long-term goals and aspirations.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices receive regular progress reviews, so that employers and apprentices have an accurate overview of progress.
- Leaders and governors must ensure that staff prepare apprentices well for their final assessments, so that they can achieve their planned learning outcomes, including in English and mathematics.
- Leaders should ensure that learners and apprentices have planned opportunities to develop their talents and interests beyond the core curriculum.
- Leaders must ensure that there is an effective programme in place to enable learners and apprentices to develop a secure understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.

- Leaders should develop their staff training opportunities to enable tutors to develop their pedagogical expertise.

Provider details

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Principal, CEO or equivalent	Yvonne Kelly
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	22 April 2013
Main subcontractors	Aspire Sporting Academy Learning and Skills Solutions SR Partnership

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the chief operating officer, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's 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.

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