

Short inspection of Brent Start Adult Education Service

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 March 2023

Outcome

Brent Start Adult Education Service continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Brent Start Adult Education service is the largest local authority provider of adult learning within the West London Alliance. They provide adult learning and community learning courses. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 1,400 learners on a range of courses. The large majority of these learners study English as second language courses (ESOL). Smaller numbers of learners study English and mathematics, early years, health and social care, information technology and a range of craft courses. The provider has one main site in Brent, west London, and a variety of outreach centres, including libraries, schools and family well-being centres.

The provider does not work with subcontractors.

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

Learners really enjoy their learning at Brent start. They learn in highly inclusive, safe and welcoming environments. From the moment they arrive at their learning centres, enthusiastic and caring staff greet them. Learners are very respectful of the range of diverse cultures at the centres. Learners form close friendship groups.

Learners with ESOL frequently discuss in their lessons the distinct types of religion and beliefs of their peers. They are genuinely interested and curious to learn about the range of different customs they have. They appreciate why British values are important to them and their families. They feel as if they are in a small community within a community. As a result, they are more willing to engage in activities in their community such as in charity work.

Learners on community learning courses gain essential skills that help them in their everyday lives. Learners on basic digital skills courses for the over fifties, learn quickly how to send emails and how to register for online banking and utility provider websites. Learners on the advanced sewing course make high-quality

garments to wear for work and to religious festivals. Learners on the flower arranging course gain in confidence. They use their skills well to provide bouquets for festivals and funerals within their community. Hairdressing learners practise their 'hair-up' and blow-drying skills on their family.

Learners with special educational needs (SEN) work well together. They enjoy their practical learning. They particularly like the painting and art activities, and produce work of which they are proud. For example, learners produced an eye-catching logo for the new centre tuck shop.

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

Leaders have a clear purpose and rationale to offer a curriculum which helps engage the local community, and support those from the most deprived areas. The ESOL courses meet the needs of a considerable proportion of residents in the community. The good range of vocational and community learning courses help support learners to integrate in the community, develop their confidence and access further learning.

Leaders, managers and staff continue to have high expectations for their learners. Through their frequent quality assurance activities, they focus sufficiently on where they need to make improvements. Where appropriate, they put in place effective actions. For example, on the small number of courses where learners do not achieve as well, such as entry level ESOL reading and writing, leaders add extra sessions in writing, conversation, grammar, and punctuation, and activities such as the book club, to support learners.

Teachers sequence the curriculum effectively. In ESOL courses, teachers teach learners the foundation knowledge they need to speak, listen and write accurately, using everyday activities. For example, they use tasks such as how to make appointments with doctors and dentists. In health and social care, and early years courses, teachers ensure learners understand key information about safeguarding before they move on to other topics. As a result, learners build their knowledge over time and apply their learning to their work and home lives.

Teachers are professionally qualified and have good relevant subject knowledge and experience. They use their skills and knowledge effectively to teach and re-enforce learning. Teachers in vocational areas share their own experiences to give learners helpful and relevant examples. As a result, learners recall and remember what they are taught. The vast majority of learners complete and achieve their courses.

Learners are provided with good support from teachers. They are patient with learners and encourage them to take part in lessons. Teachers make lessons interesting. They include a good range of strategies such as discussions, videos and active participation. Teachers ensure they include all learners. For example, in ESOL lessons, learners come to the front of the class to rearrange phrases on interactive whiteboards and to identify nouns, verbs and adjectives in sentences.

Staff and teachers use assessment effectively. They use the outcomes of the thorough assessment of learners' prior knowledge and skills correctly to identify the right level and course for learners. Teachers use questioning skilfully to check learners' understanding. For example, they reform questions so that learners understand. They probe learners to encourage them to expand on their answers.

Not all teachers review learners' progress consistently well. Most teachers build a particularly good rapport with learners in review meetings. They use this to good effect to discuss how well learners make progress and to set clear actions for learners' next steps. However, a minority of teachers do not make it clear to learners how well they are doing. They do not set learners concise enough individualised goals to work towards. In community learning, when learners repeat a course, it is not always clear why or how this will help them progress.

Learners receive effective careers advice and guidance at the start of their courses. Teachers provide learners with helpful guidance about their potential next steps in education. However, leaders have not focused sufficiently on ensuring learners benefit from a wider programme of impartial careers advice and guidance. They have recently started to implement plans to improve this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers develop a positive safeguarding culture. They ensure staff place a high priority on the safety and well-being of their learners. The designated safeguarding staff team is appropriately trained and experienced. Staff follow the safeguarding policy and procedures correctly. They respond quickly when potential safeguarding issues arise and work closely with the wider safeguarding teams in the council.

Leaders and those responsible for governance ensure they meet their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty. They also ensure that staff are appropriately checked and suitable to work with adult learners, including those who are vulnerable.

Learners feel safe. They receive helpful information at induction about how to keep safe. They know whom to report concerns to if they have any. Teachers adapt the concept of the dangers associated with radicalisation and those with extreme views sensibly for SEN and ESOL learners.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that teachers give learners clear feedback on their progress during their reviews with learners. Teachers should give learners clear and concise goals to work towards.

- Leaders should ensure that learners on community learning courses know exactly how their studies will help them progress to their next steps.
- Leaders should implement their plans to broaden the opportunities for learners to receive more detailed impartial careers advice and guidance.

Provider details

Unique reference number	53106
Address	Brent Start Hillside Centre Twybridge Way London NW10 0ST
Contact number	020 89373950
Website	https://www.brent.gov.uk/brentstart
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Marc Jordan
Provider type	Community Learning and Skills
Date of previous inspection	2 and 3 December 2020
Main subcontractors	n/a

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Brent Start Adult Education Service was judged to be good in March 2017.

The inspection team was assisted by the Head of Brent Start, 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

Jane Hughes, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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