

Inspection of Adult Education in Gloucestershire

Inspection dates:

9 to 12 May 2023

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

Adult Education in Gloucestershire provides education and training to adult learners and apprentices in Gloucester and the surrounding area. They provide courses to around 3,000 adult learners for community learning and essential skills. They offer a wide range of community learning courses, including family learning, independent living and employability courses and essential skills such as qualifications in English, mathematics, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and digital skills.

Around 14% of community learning provision is provided through five subcontractors who mainly work with adult learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

At the time of inspection, there were 76 apprentices studying a range of standards-based apprenticeships in the administration, child development and well-being and direct learning support sectors. Most apprentices study at level 3, including the three largest apprenticeships: early years educator with 26 apprentices, business administrator with 15 apprentices and teaching assistant with 13 apprentices. Eight apprentices study at level 2 and five apprentices study at level 5. A small minority of apprentices are under 18.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy the welcoming and supportive learning environments created by their tutors. As a result, learners and apprentices have positive attitudes to their learning and are well motivated.

Learners and apprentices are respectful of their tutors and each other. This is because tutors set clear and high expectations about conduct and behaviour from the beginning and keep these high standards.

Learners and apprentices increase their understanding of fundamental British values because tutors promote them well through the curriculums. They encourage learners and apprentices to exemplify these values and broaden their awareness through planned opportunities to discuss topics of interest.

Learners and apprentices produce high-quality work at the expected standard for the level at which they are working. Learners and apprentices develop confidence in their abilities and increase their resilience and independence because teachers give them opportunities to reflect on their learning and the standards they reach in their curriculums.

The very large majority of apprentices achieve the aims of their course. Apprentices develop the necessary skills to improve their contribution to the workplace. For example, employers give early years educator apprentices additional responsibilities such as leading on the observation of children and planning for their next steps. A high proportion of apprentices achieve distinction grades for their apprenticeship, and most remain with their existing employer or in their sector when they complete their training. Employers value the contribution their apprentices make to their workforce.

Most adult learners achieve their goals. For example, learners on creative courses develop new weaving skills which they apply to different design features in their projects. Learners on employability courses build their confidence in interview techniques through the support they receive from tutors and the opportunities they have to practise these. Tutors of ESOL courses do not provide learners with sufficient opportunities to practise their skills. As a result, ESOL learners do not make progress at the rate which they are capable of.

Learners and apprentices are taught how to keep themselves safe in their communities and at work. Learners are supported with their well-being by tutors who are concerned for their welfare and take appropriate actions when needed.

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

Leaders communicate very effectively with a range of partner organisations, including businesses, the wider local authority and community groups. As a result, they are well informed about local skills priorities and the changing needs of the

community, including the needs of disadvantaged learners. Leaders design curriculums to meet these needs effectively and in doing so, support learners, including those who are furthest from work, to increase their knowledge and skills. Leaders design family learning courses to improve learners' numeracy and literacy skills and they expanded their ESOL offer to meet the demand from refugees.

Leaders design apprenticeship curriculums in partnership with employers to ensure apprentices learn the knowledge and skills employers value and need. For example, business administrator apprentices take useful additional professional development courses to further their understanding of how businesses work and the role of administrators at all levels of an organisation.

Leaders use well-chosen subcontractors to provide specialist courses, including courses for learners with SEND. Subcontractors' staff are well qualified and use their expert knowledge and resources to teach learners well and to develop their confidence and abilities. For example, tutors and support assistants use a combination of calm and lively music and role-model movements skilfully to develop learners' coordination and encourage participation. Tutors and support assistants support learners to choose their best pieces of artwork to create an artistic display for a local museum.

Subcontractor staff use their wider networks well to support learners to make new connections and develop a sense of belonging in the community. Learners with SEND on creative courses enthusiastically take part in local creative festivals, and a few join local sewing groups.

Tutors are well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable in the subjects and industries they teach. They use information about what learners and apprentices already know and can do to plan curriculums to build learning in a logical order. For example, mathematics tutors support learners with the small steps required to build towards more complex calculations such as the perimeter of semicircles.

Tutors use a range of teaching activities successfully to develop learners' and apprentices' new knowledge and skills. Business administrator apprentices' tutors develop activities that enable apprentices to discuss the contexts of different workplaces to consider different viewpoints. This broadens their knowledge of how different businesses work and enables them to share ideas. ESOL tutors use relevant pictures and diagrams well to help new learners understand the context of the lessons and to build their vocabulary. They use focused questions to specific learners to build their confidence and skills in speaking and listening. ESOL learners use their learning to support everyday tasks such as asking questions when shopping. However, leaders have not designed a curriculum which enables tutors to develop learners' fluency of language more quickly through greater opportunities to practise skills and receive feedback in lessons.

Tutors provide learners and apprentices with mostly useful feedback on their work and their skills development that helps them to improve. Tutors support learners on community courses well to complete learning journals. These help learners to think

about their learning and progress towards their goals, including personal targets. ESOL tutors provide learners with helpful oral feedback in lessons, but written feedback that identifies errors is not always followed up in a timely way. This slows the improvement that learners make in their written work.

Apprentices' tutors work collaboratively with employers to monitor and support the progress that apprentices make. Employers and tutors coordinate apprentices' on- and off-the-job training effectively to ensure apprentices can practise new learning at work promptly. As a result, apprentices develop confidence in new skills and behaviours rapidly. For example, early years educator apprentices gain experience in working with different age ranges of children to understand the different communication strategies they need to use. However, too many employers do not provide their apprentices with clearly protected time at work to complete their off-the-job training. Too often, these apprentices are interrupted from their training, and a few apprentices need to complete work for their apprenticeship in their own time.

Most learners and apprentices have high rates of attendance to lessons and training sessions and are punctual. Tutors expect learners and apprentices to tell them about the reasons for any non-attendance, and most do so. Learning coordinators follow up on learners' and apprentices' non-attendance effectively. Tutors use appropriate strategies to support learners who miss lessons, such as giving them access to a recording of the lesson or individual support, to help them catch up.

Leaders provide learners with access to impartial careers advice and guidance through partner organisations at the end of their courses. Leaders do not ensure that learners and apprentices develop their understanding of the careers available to them throughout their courses. As a result, although learners and apprentices have clear plans for what they want their next steps to be, they are not always fully aware of all the options available to them.

Leaders and managers provide a range of useful training opportunities to develop tutors' subject knowledge and maintain current understanding of their sectors. For example, early years educator apprenticeship tutors work with partners to increase their knowledge of speech and language development to ensure their teaching is up to date.

Leaders' and managers' evaluation of teaching focuses on systems and processes rather than quality. Managers do not give tutors developmental feedback or give them opportunities to learn how to further improve their teaching skills through training.

Leaders do not use all the information that they could to evaluate their provision, including the work of sub-contractors, in their self-assessment. Leaders' self-assessment does not focus sufficiently on the quality of teaching. As a result, their self-assessment lacks accuracy and precision and they are not fully aware of all their strengths and weaknesses. Leaders' actions are not sufficiently targeted on areas for improvement and too often focus on the development of further systems rather than considering the impact of these systems. Leaders have not made progress towards

most of the recommendations identified in previous inspection reports, which judged the provision as good.

Governors use their expertise in business, employment and skills very effectively to support the strategic direction and vision of the senior leaders. They help ensure that leaders develop new curriculums to support the identified needs of employers, learners and the wider community. They enable further partnership working to widen participation and support learners' progression to their next steps. Governors recognise the need to receive more useful reports, including accurate self-assessment, from senior leaders and to use partners with experience in further education to increase their scrutiny of the information they receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders embrace a culture of safeguarding which extends to the welfare and well-being of learners and staff. Leaders ensure staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding, know their responsibilities and how to raise concerns. Governors receive useful training and reports about safeguarding that provide them with the necessary oversight and accountability.

Staff receive useful, frequent safeguarding updates on current issues to improve their awareness of a range of relevant topics, including knife crime, incels and misogyny. However, not all tutors share this information with learners and apprentices to improve their understanding. Learners and apprentices know how to report concerns, who to report them to and how to get support.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the accuracy and precision of self-assessment so that leaders, managers and governors know what the strengths and weaknesses of the provision are. Ensure relevant actions are taken to make identified improvements more rapidly.
- Evaluate the quality of teaching and training more effectively and use this information to inform future training for tutors to improve their teaching skills.
- Improve the planning and teaching of the ESOL curriculum to provide learners with the opportunity to make more rapid progress.
- Ensure learners and apprentices receive timely and effective impartial careers advice and guidance as part of their curriculum.
- Ensure apprentices receive their full entitlement to protected time for off-the-job training.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50128
Address	4-6 Commercial Road Gloucester GL1 2EA
Contact number	01452 583800
Website	www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/adult-education-in-gloucestershire/
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Sarah Carne
Provider type	Local authority provider
Date of previous inspection	3 October 2017
Main subcontractors	Art Shape Cinderford Artspace National Star College Cotswold Communities First The Nationwide Community Learning - Partnership Ltd

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of adult education service, 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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