

# Inspection of Thurrock Adult Community College

Inspection dates: 23 to 26 May 2023

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

The quality of education	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Apprenticeships	<b>Inadequate</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

Thurrock Adult Community College (TACC) provides adult education programmes in the Borough of Thurrock.

At the time of inspection, 339 learners were on adult learning courses. Just under two thirds of adults study qualification-based courses at entry level 1 to level 3 in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), counselling, accounting and functional skills English and mathematics. The remainder of adults attend a wide range of community learning courses in arts and crafts, family learning, well-being and conversational ESOL classes. There were 32 apprentices on the level 3 business administrator standard apprenticeship programme, all employed by the local council.

At the time of inspection, TACC did not have any subcontractors and did not have learners in receipt of high needs funding.

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

Learners and apprentices value the inclusive culture at the college and feel welcome when they attend. Learners and apprentices show respectful behaviours towards their peers and tutors. They recognise and accept the similarities and differences in their backgrounds. For example, in ESOL classes tutors encourage learners to talk about their religion, culture and race. They take part in cultural festivals and celebrate diversity. This creates a positive environment for learning. As a result, most learners' attendance is good.

Learners and apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged are effectively supported by tutors and staff. In addition, those learners and apprentices that do not have a computer benefit from a loaned laptop so that they can access online resources.

Most learners benefit from the ongoing careers advice and guidance they need to plan their next steps. Learners access useful sessions and learn how to write a curriculum vitae and how to search for a job. However, apprentices do not benefit from ongoing careers advice and guidance as part of the planned curriculum.

Learners and apprentices appreciate that they can give their views about things that affect them. They know that tutors and staff will listen to them. Learners and apprentices know that tutors will act on instances of negative behaviour or discrimination swiftly and effectively. Learners and apprentices are confident that they know who to contact should they need to report anything. Learners and apprentices feel safe in their learning environments and when learning online.

Apprentices do not benefit from a well-planned curriculum. Too many apprentices study topics that do not apply to their job roles. Apprentices' line managers help them to become valued members of their teams. However, apprentices do not apply their learning at work effectively. Their line managers are not sufficiently familiar with the content of the apprenticeship. Line managers do not provide sufficient opportunities at work for apprentices to put their learning into practice. As a result, too many apprentices are behind in their studies.

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

Leaders have carefully developed an ambitious adult learning curriculum to support learners that have many different and sometimes significant barriers to learning. Learners that have sought asylum or are a refugee attend the college community hubs. They access the ESOL curriculum. This teaches them the English language skills they need for the new communities in which they live and work. The community learning offer helps learners socially, financially and emotionally through well-being courses that bring them closer to ongoing learning. As a result, learners access programmes that support them to gain the skills and knowledge required for further training or employment opportunities.

Leaders have not developed an appropriate apprenticeship programme. For too many apprentices it does not meet their job requirements. Apprentices study towards functional skills qualifications in their own time. As a result, too few complete their course in a timely manner. Apprentices' line managers do not have any input into the content of the apprenticeship. As a result, links between on- and off-the-job training are poor.

Leaders and managers ensure that most learning programmes follow a suitable order. For example, ESOL programmes are designed so that learners can join at appropriate entry points throughout the year. The community learning 'Good to be me' well-being course has a suitable structure. Learners first learn about self-confidence and self-esteem before moving on to stress management. However, a minority of the unaccredited ESOL preparatory courses and the online NHS mathematics programme are poorly planned and structured. Learners that access the online NHS mathematics course do not receive the support they need to progress with their learning. As a result, a high number of learners leave the programme early.

Managers and tutors on adult learning and apprenticeship programmes do not use information about learners' existing skills and knowledge effectively to plan learning. In functional skills mathematics courses, staff do not consider what learners already know. In too many cases, learners study all topics despite their existing skills and knowledge. While tutors ensure that learners have targets, too often they are generic and lack the quality to be useful to support learning. However, tutors of ESOL courses complete detailed assessments of learners' starting points. This ensures that learners are on the right level of learning to meet their needs.

Tutors and staff are suitably experienced and qualified in the subjects they teach. Most tutors provide clear explanations for learners and apprentices. Tutors use practical examples to help illustrate points and to make concepts relevant to the real world. Tutors of level 3 accounting qualifications frequently use illustrated examples to demonstrate value added tax payment corrections. As a result, learners and apprentices quickly grasp new topics.

Most tutors teaching adult programmes check learning effectively. Tutors of well-being sessions ask learners to identify the difference between meditation and mindfulness. They correct learners that have any misconceptions. Tutors provide learners with a range of helpful resources on the college virtual learning environment (VLE). Teachers of ESOL courses review learning completed at home and reinforce it when learners are back in the classroom. As a result, most learners gain new knowledge and skills effectively over time.

Learners benefit from helpful written and verbal feedback from tutors. Functional skills mathematics tutors help learners develop their examination techniques. Tutors encourage learners to consider what questions are asking them. They support them to develop strategies which help make similar questions more accessible in the future. However, the written feedback tutors give to apprentices does not challenge them to improve their work. Apprentices write descriptively and lack any reference

to theory. As a result, too often apprentices' work does not reflect the academic standard of their level of learning.

Most adult learners gain the skills and knowledge that help them to succeed in work and life. Learners that attend the watercolour painting course develop their colour wash techniques. They show more advanced shading in their paintings over time. Functional skills mathematics learners improve their skills. They can now help their children with homework. However, too many apprentices leave the programme early. Those that remain make slow progress and are behind where they should be at this stage in their programme.

Leaders have been too slow to remedy the known weaknesses in the quality of the provision. They have recently developed detailed action plans and have begun to monitor the outcomes of these actions. However, it is too soon to see any demonstrable impact on improving the proportion of learners achieving their qualifications. As a result, too few functional skills and ESOL learners achieve at levels 1 and 2 and too few learners achieve their vocational qualifications at level 3.

Governance arrangements have recently strengthened and are now effective. Until recently there has not been the necessary and important oversight required to hold senior leaders to account for improving the quality of the provision. Governors have worked with leaders to establish useful metrics to monitor the quality of education. Governors have an emerging clarity about the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. They frequently meet with leaders to look at the progress made with the action plans that leaders develop. Governors challenge leaders on the actions they take. As a result, governors recognise the improvements which are still required to be made to the provision.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Learners and apprentices demonstrate an effective awareness of safeguarding. They know who to report any concerns to. They know what constitutes a concern and are aware of the signs to look for in their peers. Apprentices have an effective awareness of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. However, too few adult learners have a secure understanding of the local risks of radicalisation in the communities in which they live.

Designated safeguarding leaders have the appropriate training and experience to carry out their roles effectively. They implement useful mechanisms to support learners and apprentices to make referrals directly to them. For example, on the college VLE, learners and apprentices can report their concerns via 'I don't feel safe' button. As a result, learners and apprentices are appropriately supported.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders must improve tutors' use of learners' starting points in the planning and teaching of the curriculum to ensure that tutors take account of what learners know and can do before they start learning.
- Leaders must increase the proportion of adult learners that achieve their qualifications.
- Leaders must design an apprenticeship programme that meets the principles of an apprenticeship programme and ensure that it is suitable and tailored to apprentices' job roles.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices' line managers have an input into the order and content of the apprenticeship programme so that effective links can be made between on-and off-the-job training.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices stay on their programme and successfully achieve their apprenticeship in a timely manner.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices receive sufficiently broad and impartial careers guidance so that they know how they can use their skills to progress to their intended next steps.
- Leaders must ensure that adult learners have a good understanding of the local risks of radicalisation and extremism in the areas in which they live and work.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	54975
<b>Address</b>	1st Floor West Building High Street Grays RM17 6TF
<b>Contact number</b>	01375 372476
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.tacc.ac.uk">www.tacc.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Jacqueline Bradley
<b>Provider type</b>	Community Learning and Skills
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 February 2013
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## 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

Robert Bamford, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Rebecca Perry	His Majesty's Inspector
Georgina Ager	His Majesty's Inspector
Rob Bates	Ofsted Inspector

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