

# Inspection of Blackpool Borough Council

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 June 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

Blackpool Borough Council manages Blackpool Learning Rooms (BLR) within its communications and regeneration directorate. Blackpool is ranked as one of the most deprived local authority areas in England. BLR provides programmes throughout the borough and offers a range of accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities to support adults and learners with high needs to return to work or gain employment.

At the time of the inspection, there were 96 adult learners enrolled on courses and nine learners with high needs on a supported internship programme. The most popular courses are in English, mathematics, information technology (IT) and employability skills.

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

Learners have a very positive attitude to their learning; they are polite and highly motivated. Learners show high levels of respect for their tutors and peers and participate fully in learning sessions. Attendance is excellent. Learners understand the importance of attendance at learning sessions and work placements.

Learners grow significantly in confidence and self-esteem. Adult learners can provide presentations to audiences, and learners with high needs are able to communicate sensitively with a broad range of customers in busy tourist attractions. This enables learners to make positive changes to their lives to help them to move towards their long-term goal of employment.

Learners highly value the support and care that they receive from their tutors. Learners with high needs become resilient and overcome personal challenges, such as travelling independently and performing routine work tasks. Adult learners develop strategies to manage their behaviours. These strategies enable them to remain focused and continue with their learning.

Many learners participate in community activities. For example, they volunteer in charity shops, at local foodbanks and with the homeless, to provide hot food and warm clothing. In a few cases, learners with high needs participate in a social action project, 'Sam's Place', where they learn to cook basic meals and socialise with others.

Learners are aware of how to stay fit and healthy. Learners with high needs participate in well-being walks, gym visits and play in the local football team as part of the 'Blackpool get out, get active' project.

Learners feel safe. They know how and to whom they should report any issues or concerns. Learners complete useful training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. However, not all learners are able to articulate their training, and they are not sufficiently aware of local risks that may affect them, such as county lines.

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

Leaders, managers and tutors are enthusiastic about meeting the needs of their residents. They nurture effective working relationships with employers, Jobcentre Plus and charitable trusts to create an individualised curriculum that is aimed at the most disadvantaged learners in the Blackpool region to help them gain employment or move closer to the job market. However, leaders do not ensure that the curriculum for all learners with high needs is sufficiently ambitious, and, in a few cases, these learners are not challenged to achieve their potential.

Leaders support local, regional and national skills priorities and meet learners' needs and employment aspirations. The Project Search programme supports learners with high needs to progress into retail, hospitality and tourist attractions through highly

effective work placements. Adult learners participate in 'feed four for a fiver' in order to develop culinary and budgeting skills that they need in their daily lives.

Leaders ensure that they have effective quality assurance processes in place to evaluate the quality of training that learners receive. They carry out regular observations of tutors' teaching and assessment. Where tutors do not reach the required standards, they are provided with support to ensure they swiftly improve their teaching skills. This ensures that learners receive a consistently high standard of education.

Tutors are experienced and appropriately qualified to provide training for learners. Tutors develop their behaviour management skills and learn how to use learners' starting points effectively when planning learning sessions. Most tutors complete additional qualifications, such as level 5 mathematics and assessor awards. This ensures that learners receive consistently good levels of training.

Tutors are experienced in dealing with learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This results in learners with high needs making the progress of which they are capable. Most tutors remain up to date by working as practitioners in the sector and completing regular sector-related training. However, a few tutors do not maintain and update their vocational currency so as to ensure that the most up-to-date knowledge is delivered to learners.

Learners develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours because of their programmes. For example, learners on English programmes learn how to improve their spelling and punctuation before progressing to the use of connectives. Learners with high needs become knowledgeable about a wide range of saltwater fish and can feed sharks safely using a special feeding pole. This results in learners making progress at work and towards their next steps.

The curriculum is sequenced logically so that learners can incrementally build their knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, IT learners begin with the basics of a computer, such as using the power function and a mouse, before progressing to sending emails and ordering shopping online. Consequently, learners build their knowledge over time in a meaningful way.

Most learners benefit from useful feedback that helps them to understand how to improve. Learners in English improve their writing skills and spelling, enabling them to produce promotional leaflets at work. Job coaches provide constructive feedback to learners with high needs in practical sessions. This enables them to improve the standard of their practical work. However, a few learners do not receive sufficient developmental feedback on their written work, which prevents them from knowing how to improve.

Tutors use assessment well to check learners' knowledge. Tutors help learners to tackle misconceptions, and to develop their understanding further. This enables learners to learn more and remember more over time.

Tutors, job coaches and workplace mentors review learners' progress frequently. They agree learning goals with learners and update their individual learning plans effectively. Most adult learners and all learners with high needs are on target to complete their programmes on time. Most learners achieve their learning goals. Nearly all learners progress to employment, voluntary work or further learning.

Staff provide all learners with information, advice and guidance throughout their programme. Learners attend careers events and talks with employers, which enables learners to make informed decisions about their career pathways. Many learners who are not yet ready to determine their future careers discuss their possible next steps with tutors, such as developing more advanced skills in using spreadsheets.

Leaders and managers place a high priority on the well-being and workload of staff. Staff have access to mental health first aiders and an employee assistance programme that offers a range of benefits, such as counselling. Staff have the opportunity for flexitime and homeworking to ensure they have a positive work-life balance.

Those responsible for governance are experienced and knowledgeable to carry out their roles. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. Governors receive high-quality reports from leaders, which enables them to provide the necessary scrutiny and challenge to help them to improve the quality of education.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have put in place a range of effective policies and procedures to ensure that safeguarding and the safety of learners are prioritised. For example, learners with high needs wear personal protective equipment when working in science laboratories. Staff use links to external agencies effectively in order to signpost learners to additional help relating to housing and mental health.

Leaders complete appropriate pre-employment checks when appointing new staff in order to ensure that they are suitable to work with learners. They place a high priority on ensuring that all staff, including those at board level, benefit from regular safeguarding training. All members of the safeguarding team receive appropriate training to allow them to conduct their roles effectively. They know how to keep learners safe, and they report any concerns that they may have.

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

- Leaders should ensure that the curriculum for all learners with high needs is ambitious and sufficiently challenging.
- Leaders should ensure that they routinely and to good effect develop learners' knowledge and awareness of local risks that may affect them.

- Leaders should ensure that tutors provide effective feedback on learners' written work so that learners know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.
- Leaders should ensure that all tutors maintain and enhance their vocational skills.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	50737
<b>Address</b>	Blackpool Learning Rooms Healthworks, 1 Clifton Street Blackpool FY1 1JD
<b>Contact number</b>	07703 837 976
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Education-and-schools/Adult-Learning/Blackpool-Learning-Rooms.aspx">www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Education-and-schools/Adult-Learning/Blackpool-Learning-Rooms.aspx</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Donna Clayton
<b>Provider type</b>	Local authority provider
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	22 to 25 January 2019
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of Blackpool Learning Rooms, 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

Suzanne Horner, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Dilys Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Shabana Mahmood	Ofsted Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector

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