

# Inspection of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Inspection dates:

21 to 24 November 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

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

## **Information about this provider**

Dudley Adult and Community Learning Service is part of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, providing learning opportunities for adults across the borough. At the time of the inspection, there were 330 adult learners enrolled on courses across seven locations in the local area, including three neighbourhood learning centres. Leaders offer both accredited and non-accredited courses for residents. The accredited courses range from entry level to level 2.

Leaders have selected courses that have a clear focus on developing skills that residents need to enter employment. Courses running during inspection included English, mathematics, digital skills, English for speakers of other languages and community courses, including creative personal development and preparing for employment in floristry.

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

Learners experience a welcoming and inclusive learning environment. Leaders have strategically placed seven centres across the borough. This results in learners from a range of communities attending courses. Tutors help learners to understand the diverse cultures and backgrounds in the communities in which they live. Tutors teach learners about religious celebrations such as Diwali and its significance in the community.

Learners successfully develop their character and confidence. Learners improve their confidence as they gain skills and complete creative projects. As a result, most learners feel equipped to achieve their set goals in their personal lives, work or education.

Learners' attendance on courses is too low. Leaders have tried to improve learners' attendance using various strategies, but too many learners still do not attend often enough. As a result, these learners do not develop this key attribute they need for the world of work.

Learners do not have a secure understanding of radicalisation and extremism. Tutors teach this topic at the beginning of their studies, but it is rarely revisited. As a result, learners only develop a superficial understanding and are not clear on how this learning impacts their lives.

Learners feel safe. They are confident that instances of bullying and harassment are not tolerated. Tutors teach learners about dangers to their well-being and teach them how to stay safe. For example, digital skills learners now know how to stay safe when shopping online. They can set secure passwords, use transaction authenticators, and are more vigilant to online fraud.

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

Leaders build strong relationships with stakeholders such as West Midlands Combined Authority and Jobcentre Plus to create employment opportunities for residents. Leaders identify the skills that employers need and design curriculums to teach them. Many learners on employability courses move on quickly into employment when they complete their course.

Leaders ensure that curriculums offered are coherently planned and sequenced. As a result, learners build on their knowledge and skills over time effectively. For example, in functional skills mathematics, learners start by learning numbers and measurement. Learners then build on this knowledge, learning about more advanced topics, such as data representation.

Leaders ensure that they recruit tutors who are experts in the subjects they teach. Leaders provide tutors with ongoing training to ensure their industry skills remain current. However, tutors are not provided with enough opportunities to improve their

teaching practice. As a result, a few tutors use ineffective teaching strategies, and a small minority of learners do not progress as quickly as they are able to.

Tutors teach learners new knowledge clearly and concisely. As a result, learners gain a better understanding of the subject matter taught. This supports learners to understand key concepts well. For example, functional skills mathematics learners are taught uncomplicated ways to multiply single digit numbers. They grasp this key concept and continue to build their knowledge over time.

Tutors recap taught content frequently and systematically. Learners can recall their prior understanding fluently. For example, in floristry courses, tutors often review important concepts like using the colour wheel to choose contrasting and complementary colours. As a result, most learners deepen their understanding of the subjects they are taught.

Tutors use assessments to determine the right level of study for most learners at the start of their course. Tutors identify learners' long-term goals, obstacles to their learning, and current skills when they start. Tutors use this information to adjust their teaching to ensure that most learners gain new knowledge and skills quickly.

Tutors encourage learners to use subject-specific, professional and technical vocabulary well. For example, digital skills learners use terms like encryption, phishing, malware, and two-factor authentication with confidence in their written work and when contributing to class discussions. Learners are prepared well for their next steps in education or employment.

Tutors provide learners with many opportunities to practise and improve their skills. As a result, learners commit learning to their long-term memory and improve their skills. For example, digital skills learners regularly practise using digital presentation systems, which helps them to become confident and fluent in using these systems.

Leaders have significantly increased the number of learners who successfully complete their course. Leaders closely monitor courses and use strategies to improve teachers' performance. More learners are succeeding and progressing towards their chosen goals. For example, in the functional skills mathematics curriculum, most learners did not pass their qualification in the previous year. Leaders improved learners' experiences by identifying best teaching practices and investing in resources. Leaders then provided training for tutors teaching this subject. As a result, the proportion of learners who successfully completed their qualification has significantly improved.

Governors hold senior leaders to account for the quality of education that learners receive. Governors ensure that senior leaders provide sufficient information to understand strengths and areas for improvement. Governors regularly measure areas that require improvement and provide support with effective strategies when necessary.

A few tutors do not always apply effective assessment techniques to establish learners' understanding. In these cases, tutors do not ensure that learners fully understand taught subjects before moving on. As a result, learners' misunderstandings are not rectified swiftly on these courses.

Tutors do not always act to provide clear and developmental written feedback for learners. Too often, the written feedback learners receive lacks sufficient clarity and precision. This means that learners are not always clear of the actions they need to take to improve their understanding or the quality of their work.

Staff provide most learners with effective careers education, information, advice and guidance. Learners appreciate this guidance and use it to plan their next steps, which brings them closer to finding a job. However, in a few cases, learners studying functional skills mathematics are not given clear guidance on the options available to them on completion of their studies.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Ensure that learners benefit from teaching and assessment techniques that identify misunderstandings and inform teaching.
- Ensure that all learners receive developmental feedback that informs learners of what they have done well and how to improve their work.
- Ensure that the attendance of learners to their courses improves.
- Provide tutors with continuous professional development that improves their teaching practice.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	50218
<b>Address</b>	The Council House Priory Road Dudley DY1 1HF
<b>Contact number</b>	01384 813975
<b>Website</b>	Dudley.gov.uk
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Viv Webb
<b>Provider type</b>	Community learning and skills
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 February 2020
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	N/A

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality improvement manager, 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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