

Inspection of Buckinghamshire Council

Inspection dates: 30 April to 3 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Outstanding
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Buckinghamshire Adult Learning is part of the children's services directorate. The provider teaches courses in nine venues across the county. At the time of the inspection, the provider had 1,703 adult learners studying programmes that include community engagement, family learning, learning for all, digital, online certificates, English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The provider had 23 students aged 16 to 18, most are studying supported internships. One hundred and twelve apprentices are on standards-based programmes from levels 2 to 5. A large proportion of apprentices are studying the early years educator and team leader standards at level 3.

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

Learners and apprentices are very respectful of one another. They benefit from studying in an inclusive environment. Most learners and apprentices are highly motivated. They have positive attitudes to learning and attend well. Learners receive teaching that supports them to make positive progress. As a result, most achieve and move on to positive destinations at the end of their courses.

Learners and apprentices become confident in the workplace. Apprentices studying level 3 early years educator are confident when communicating with parents in childcare settings. Job coaches effectively support young learners on supported internships to develop their communication skills. Learners who were previously non-verbal have progressed to working in customer-facing situations. Learners and apprentices develop the qualities they need to flourish in employment or further study.

Learners and apprentices have a good awareness of how to be safe. Learners are aware of how to protect themselves from risks such as fraud and scamming, following workshops from Thames Valley Police and Trading Standards. Adults with learning difficulties undertake training in self-defence, which gives them greater confidence to travel independently. Learners and apprentices know who to contact if they have concerns and are confident that staff will deal with any issues quickly, consistently and effectively.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders have repurposed their adult funding to develop courses that are targeted towards the most disadvantaged adults in the county. As part of 'Opportunity Bucks' the council has identified wards where people experience the most hardship, are economically inactive and are ambitious to enter the workforce. Leaders have established an educational offer within these areas to make sure those with the greatest need can access essential training.

Leaders and teachers make sure adult learners overcome any barriers to learning and develop the knowledge and skills they need to improve their life chances. They feel more confident and become more involved in their communities. Leaders have increased opportunities for those most in need, such as expanding the ESOL curriculum to accommodate learners from Ukraine who have recently moved into Buckinghamshire. Teachers effectively support learners who are unfamiliar with the English education system to prepare their children for school. Many learners express how they came to the United Kingdom with little understanding of English, but they can now access community services without the need for an interpreter. Several have secured employment.

Leaders and teachers work closely with feeder schools to make sure young learners transition successfully on to supported internships. Teachers carry out detailed initial assessments to understand learners' educational needs and develop individualised support plans to meet them. Teachers promote a culture of high expectations, which learners respond to well. Young learners make excellent progress towards their personal, social and independence goals. As a result, learners achieve well and nearly all move into sustained employment or on to further education and training.

Teachers sequence the content of the curriculum, so that learners can build on what they know to undertake more complex activities. Teachers of ESOL programmes start by teaching the essential English that learners need to use when accessing vital

services, such as making a doctor's appointment. They then move on to further their knowledge of more advanced vocabulary and workplace language. Learners become more skilful in their use of English over time, and this prepares them effectively for work.

Learners benefit from very good levels of encouragement from staff and volunteers. Teachers have developed an ambitious curriculum for learners with a range of additional needs. This supports them to achieve greater independence. For example, learners who previously required constant support and reassurance in mathematics sessions can now complete questions with less support. Staff teaching family learning courses work closely with local schools to understand the curriculum. Teachers use this information well to help learners to develop strategies to support their own children with their education. Adult learners are seeing an improvement in their children's work as a consequence. Teachers effectively support learners to make positive progress.

Most teachers are highly accomplished at teaching lessons face-to-face and online. Teachers use online tools effectively to share ideas, encourage collaboration and check learners' understanding. Teachers check apprentices' prior knowledge through online quizzes before encouraging them to share their workplace experiences around diversity and culture in smaller groups. As a result, learners learn quickly from their mistakes and are confident and eager to contribute to lessons.

Staff are highly experienced in the subjects they teach. Teachers share useful examples from industry that help apprentices relate their theoretical learning to activities they complete in the workplace. In ESOL lessons, teachers make sure that adult learners practise pronunciation to perfect their speaking skills. Learners and apprentices quickly develop an in-depth understanding of what they are taught.

Staff work effectively with learners to prepare them for work placements. They also work closely with employers to create inclusive environments for learners who need extra support. They train them how to communicate effectively with learners to meet their needs. Young learners have job coaches who give them good support to help them develop professional behaviours that employers value. Learners on supported internships are very well prepared for their placements. Employers recognise the positive influence that learners' attitudes to work are having on the rest of the workforce.

Employers value the knowledge, skills and behaviours apprentices learn and apply in the workplace. Apprentices studying level 3 early years educator learn how to adapt their approach when supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Those studying the team leader apprenticeship become more organised and effective as leaders. Apprentices have a positive impact on their organisations and the members of the teams with whom they work.

Learners and apprentices enjoy a varied and rich personal development curriculum. They learn about how to manage stress and their workload. They also learn about the importance of equality. For example, apprentices are trained to develop a better

awareness of the LGBTQ+ community. As a result, they know how to create an inclusive and caring environment for their clients. Teachers are highly effective in helping adults with little prior experience, to develop digital literacy skills. This enables them to access online content safely.

Teachers support learners and apprentices to consider career and further education opportunities that are open to them on the completion of their course. Learners on supported internships benefit from detailed skills assessments which help them consider jobs and careers they may not have previously considered. Teachers make sure apprentices are aware of career paths open to them or areas in which they might wish to specialise, such as becoming a mental health assessor. Teachers support learners and apprentices to consider their aspirations and build clear development plans.

A small number of young learners studying English, mathematics and ESOL courses do not benefit from a curriculum that is designed to meet their wider ambitions, needs and interests. While additional vocational courses and personal development opportunities are available, leaders and managers do not make sure learners access this offer.

Leaders have not been quick enough to support apprentices who fall behind. A few apprentices studying level 5 leader in adult care do not make the expected progress. They are not aware of what they need to do to get back on track. Leaders have started to introduce intervention plans that provide additional targeted support for apprentices who are past their planned end date. However, it is too early to see the impact of these interventions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Make sure that a higher proportion of young learners access opportunities to develop their wider interests and talents.
- Make sure apprentices receive rapid support to stay or get back on track.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50099
Address	Buckinghamshire Adult Learning Children's Services Quarrendon Adult Learning Centre Holman Street Aylesbury HP19 9LJ
Contact number	01296 383 109
Website	adultlearningbc.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Jacqueline Wilson
Provider type	Local authority
Dates of previous inspection	3 to 6 November 2015
Main subcontractors	Staff Power Training limited Blackburn Gould and Associates limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality 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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