

# Short inspection of Merton Adult Education

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 September 2024

## **Outcome**

Merton Adult Education (also known as Merton Adult Learning) continues to be a good provider.

## **Information about this provider**

Merton Adult Education provides adult skills and community learning courses. The aims of the service are to improve social, economic, health, well-being and employment outcomes for residents in Merton, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas of the borough. The borough is characterised by a difference between the more deprived east, Mitcham, and the more prosperous west, Wimbledon.

The courses are managed by six subcontractors who offer a range of accredited and non-accredited courses from entry level to level 2 in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), digital skills, GCSE and functional skills English and mathematics, creative art, employment skills, and health and social care. There are a range of courses for learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

At the time of the inspection, there were two subcontractors providing the majority of education and training to 586 learners. Of these, 562 learners were studying courses in ESOL, creative arts, digital skills, English and mathematics at Merton College, part of the South Thames College Group. The remaining 24 learners were studying ESOL courses with Adult Training Network.

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

Learners enjoy their studies and learn in positive and purposeful learning environments. They appreciate the valuable opportunities tutors create in lessons through group discussions and group work to increase their social interaction, develop friendships with their peers and maintain their positive mental health and well-being.

Learners receive a consistently good quality of education and training across the two subcontractors. They develop new knowledge and skills incrementally because they are taught by well-qualified and experienced tutors who use their expertise to

plan and teach the content of each curriculum effectively. As a result, a high proportion of learners achieve their planned learning goals. For example, in embroidery, tutors first teach learners a range of basic stitches such as chain stitching before learners skilfully apply their new knowledge and skills to create good quality pieces of embroidery.

Learners receive helpful careers advice and guidance from tutors and careers advisers. This includes individual career interviews, providing advice on university entry requirements, and opportunities to attend job fairs and how to pursue their interests. For example, learners on art courses receive helpful advice from tutors on how to exhibit their work and attend arts fairs to sell their work.

Learners feel safe in the places they study. This is because tutors provide detailed safeguarding information to them at induction. Subsequently, learners know how and to whom they can report concerns.

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

Leaders and managers have a well-designed strategy for the adult skills and community learning curriculum which links well to national and local priorities. They have a good strategic focus on courses related to green skills, well-being and skills for employment. They use adult skills funding to create good progression routes for learners on ESOL courses.

Leaders and managers work effectively with subcontractors to develop the curriculum offer. They have a good commissioning model and make sure that the courses they teach meet the needs of the community. For example, leaders have recently introduced supported internships for learners who have SEND that increases opportunities for them to gain employment. Leaders have good oversight of the provision offered by the subcontractors. They have robust and thorough processes in place to monitor the quality of provision.

Most tutors identify well what learners know and can do at the start of their programmes. Tutors use observations and outcomes from assessments to plan the content of the curriculum. For example, in creative arts, learners self-assess their skills, and tutors evaluate their performance on practical tasks at the start of the courses. As a result, most learners study a curriculum where they develop new knowledge and skills. However, in a few instances, tutors in ESOL do not use assessments accurately enough to identify what learners know and can do at the start of courses. Because of this, they teach curriculum content that is too challenging for a few learners.

Most tutors use effective teaching techniques that help learners remember what they have been taught. This includes use of practical demonstrations, questions and discussions. For example, tutors teaching fused stained glass give good demonstrations to teach learners how to cut glass squares and use tools correctly and safely. Tutors give learners good quality developmental feedback on the work

they produce. Subsequently, learners improve their work over time. However, in a few instances, tutors do not check learners' understanding well enough. In these instances, they do not provide helpful enough feedback so learners know how to improve their works. In a few instances, tutors do not adequately help learners to fill gaps in their knowledge.

Leaders provide a good range of professional development opportunities for staff who work at the subcontractors. This includes training on well-being, mental health, safeguarding and target-setting. For example, the mental health training helps tutors to identify the early signs of mental health concerns, know how to defuse situations, and have a good understanding of local organisations to refer learners to in times of crisis.

Advisory board members have good oversight of the provision. This is because they thoroughly review the good-quality information they receive from leaders on the strengths and areas for development of the provision. Board members have a range of skills and expertise that they use well to challenge and hold leaders to account. As a result, leaders have the capacity to make improvements to the provision so learners continue to receive good-quality education and training.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Use the outcomes from assessments at the start of the course consistently well across subcontractors who teach ESOL courses so the curriculum content is based on what learners already know and can do.
- Use effective teaching and assessment strategies consistently well so that tutors can establish what learners understand, provide helpful feedback on the progress learners make, and help to fill gaps in their knowledge.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	53325
<b>Address</b>	Merton Adult Learning Merton Civic Centre London Road Morden SM4 5DX
<b>Contact number</b>	0208 545 3640
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.merton.gov.uk/education-and-learning/adult-education-and-learning">www.merton.gov.uk/education-and-learning/adult-education-and-learning</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Elizabeth Fitzpatrick
<b>Provider type</b>	Community Learning and Skills – Local Authority
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 to 11 October 2019
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	TEC Training (GB) Limited Richmond and Hillcroft Adult Community College Global Solution Services Adult Training Network The Training Place of Excellence South Thames Colleges Group – Merton College

## Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Merton Adult Education was judged to be good in October 2019.

The inspection team was assisted by the service 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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