

Short inspection of Wolverhampton Adult Education Service

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 January 2025

Outcome

Wolverhampton Adult Education Service continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Wolverhampton Adult Education Service provides adult skills and community learning courses. The aims of the service are to improve social, economic, health, well-being and employment outcomes for the residents of Wolverhampton, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas of the city.

At the time of the inspection, there were 154 students on community learning programmes and 907 students studying adult skills courses. The service offers a range of accredited and non-accredited courses from entry level to level 5. The largest numbers are studying English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and basic English, mathematics and digital qualifications.

The service offers tailored programmes for adults with learning disabilities and those who need support to improve their mental health. Five students aged between 19 and 24 with education, health and care (EHC) plans are studying on education programmes for young people.

Three subcontractors provide ESOL or employment training for small groups of students. The service offers most programmes at two main sites in the centre of Wolverhampton.

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

Students receive good-quality education and training across the service. They develop new knowledge and skills because they are taught by well-qualified and experienced teachers. A high proportion of students, including learners with EHC plans, achieve their planned learning goals and are well prepared for their next steps.

Students benefit from the service's links with employers or community groups. Adults with learning difficulties attend well-planned placements and supported

internships. Students, at Job Change, benefit from talks from local security firms in preparation for their job applications.

Students enjoy their studies and learn in a calm and purposeful environment. They develop their confidence and feel well supported by staff. Students on the Like Minds course quickly develop trust in the teacher and their peers. They build confidence to share their feelings and present their work to larger groups of people.

Students feel safe in the places they study. Teachers explain how to keep safe at the beginning of the course and regularly refresh and revisit this information. Students 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 adult skills and community learning curriculums, which links well to national and local priorities. They use adult skills funding to create good progression routes for students on the ESOL courses, by including vocational and digital content, and providing courses from entry level to level 2. They provide positive learning opportunities for families in local schools.

Leaders and managers collaborate with subcontractors to widen the appeal of the curriculum. For example, they work with the Bilston Resource Centre to reach students with low-level digital skills, who would not otherwise travel to Wolverhampton to study. Leaders have good oversight of the provision offered by the subcontractors. Students make substantial progress from their starting points.

Teachers identify what students know and can do at the start of the course. They use this information well to plan the content of the curriculum. In most cases, teachers set appropriately challenging and precise targets. For a few students, on courses for adults with learning difficulties, teachers set targets that are too broad and are not broken down into small steps. These students make slower progress.

Most teachers select teaching approaches which enable students to remember what they have been taught. This includes practical demonstrations, and frequent opportunities to practise and recall previous learning. Teachers in functional skills mathematics demonstrate how to measure and record length, area and volume. They then provide students with opportunities to practise and refine their skill in different contexts. Teachers use assessment well and provide students with clear and precise written and oral feedback. This enables students to improve their work.

Leaders have strengthened their approach to quality assurance and improvement. They use management information, professional conversations, and work reviews to identify areas of strength and weakness. They develop detailed plans for improvement. This has contributed to improvements in students' achievement of qualifications at all levels. However, too many students left the level 1 functional skills mathematics course without achieving the qualification.

Leaders have remedied the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. They have improved student attendance so that it is now consistently high across all courses. Managers set clear expectations and use data well to identify concerns and to take swift and supportive action.

Leaders provide students with detailed initial advice on course selection. Students enrol on courses which meet their needs. Students receive appropriate guidance on their next steps. Leaders ensure that students who are looking for employment or higher skilled jobs receive specialist high-quality careers advice and guidance.

Leaders provide advisory board members with good-quality information about the broad educational context as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the service. This enables board members to support leaders in their strategic decisions and their aim to continuously improve the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Increase the proportion of students who achieve level 1 functional skills in mathematics.
- Set precise learning targets for adults with learning difficulties so that they make quicker progress.

Provider details

Unique reference number	55413
Address	Wolverhampton Adult Education Service Old Hall Street Wolverhampton WV1 3AU
Contact number	01902 558173
Website	www.aes.wolverhampton.gov.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Anna Place
Provider type	Community Learning and Skills – Local Authority
Date of previous inspection	26 to 29 November 2019
	Bilston Resource Centre
Main subcontractors	Job Change TLC

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Wolverhampton Adult Education Service was judged to be good in November 2019.

The inspection team was assisted by the quality and curriculum 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

Martin Ward, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jaswant Mann	Ofsted Inspector
Beth Selwood	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Kinghorn	Ofsted Inspector
Patricia Rogers	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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