

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council

Address: 18 Haymarket Street, BL9 0AQ

Unique reference number (URN): 50898

Inspection report: 25 November 2025

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	● ● ●
Needs attention	● ●
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, learners are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect providers for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The provider has an open and positive culture of safeguarding.
- Not met: The provider has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

1. Inclusion, and leadership and governance

Expected standard



Needs attention



Expected standard

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that learners from hard-to-reach communities are able to access courses in their neighbourhoods. Learners with care responsibilities, asylum seekers and learners from Traveller communities attend courses that would otherwise be unavailable to them. Leaders provide funding to learners with low incomes and those who experience financial hardship. They equip learners with the means to participate, remain in learning and achieve.

Tutors and learning support assistants know their learners well. They support learners to overcome any barriers to their learning and/or mental health. Staff are sensitive to the challenges that learners face. They form trusting relationships that enable learners to build their self-confidence and thrive.

Learning support assistants and tutors benefit from training in autism awareness, mindfulness, mental health and grief and bereavement. They identify barriers to learning and put appropriate support for learners in place swiftly. They make appropriate adaptations to their teaching and meet learners' individual needs effectively. Learning support assistants help learners to build their independence and achieve their personal goals.

Leaders have very recently produced an inclusion strategy. They rightly acknowledge the need to review the strategy routinely to ensure it remains effective.

Needs attention

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved their oversight of the progress that learners make. Leaders and managers are aware of the strengths and areas for improvement in their provision.

Programme managers use reporting tools appropriately to identify strengths and areas for improvement in their curriculum areas and to provide timely support to staff where this is needed. Leaders hold monthly meetings with programme managers to review progress and to ensure interventions bring about the improvements required.

Leaders are supported well by an advisory group of local councillors with a communal vision to advocate for learners across the borough. They are acutely aware of the barriers to learning in their wards, such as long-term unemployment. They work collaboratively with leaders to provide a coherent, responsive adult learning offer that meets the needs of the communities that they serve.

Advisory group members receive helpful reports from leaders. They use this information to provide leaders with considerate challenge and support. This leads to tangible improvements, such as increasing provision in the hardest-to-reach communities.

Leaders ensure that learning support staff receive suitable training. However, tutors do not routinely benefit from planned training to enhance their teaching skills. Leaders rightly recognise this as a priority for improvement.

Leaders are cognisant of factors that adversely impact on staff morale and workload. They have a strategic plan designed to improve staff's contractual arrangements and provide structured training. However, a number of ongoing external factors beyond their control have impeded leaders in bringing about these improvements quickly.

2. Adult learning programmes

Expected standard	● ●
Needs attention	●

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Leaders gather information about learners' starting points and future aspirations so that learners enrol onto appropriate courses. Learners mostly make sustained progress and acquire substantial new knowledge and skills. Learners in family learning build knowledge of phonics, early writing and fine and gross motor skills. They use this confidently to participate in and support their children's learning.

Learners mostly produce work that is at an appropriate level for their stage of learning. They complete written work with increasing accuracy. Learners studying English as an additional or other language (ESOL) speak confidently with their children's teachers.

Learners are prepared well for their examinations and for their next level of study. ESOL learners access bridging courses to enable them to proceed to study a range of subjects. Most learners achieve their qualifications and advance to higher level courses.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders know their provision well and offer a thoughtfully devised and coherent curriculum targeting their hardest to reach residents. They are passionate about providing education for learners and their families in the communities they serve.

Tutors identify, plan and teach topics that are the most helpful to learners in their everyday lives. Learners studying English as a second or other language (ESOL) practise the essential language skills that they need to perform practical daily tasks. For example, they learn to structure and produce accurate letters to inform their child's school of an absence when their child is unwell.

Tutors are qualified and experienced in the subjects that they teach. Family learning tutors use their expertise from working in primary education adeptly. They help learners to make meaningful links between child development theory and tangible practice. Learners talk enthusiastically about how they apply their learning to help their children learn at home.

Tutors mostly use appropriate teaching strategies and activities to help learners understand and remember what they have learned. They explain new information clearly. Tutors who teach therapeutic art use cue cards and questioning skilfully to introduce mindfulness to adults and their children. Learners then apply these methods effectively in their own interactions with their children.

Tutors mostly use assessment well to check for gaps in learning and to correct misconceptions quickly. Tutors of ESOL use questioning effectively to remedy errors in pronunciation. Learners value the ongoing feedback that they receive to improve the accuracy of their English.

Needs attention

Participation and development

Needs attention 

Learners do not routinely receive planned careers advice and guidance to help them into employment or to realise their career aspirations. Learners studying level 1 introduction to a career in health do benefit from planned advice and guidance. They receive information about future employment opportunities and potential career pathways from guest speakers. However, most learners do not have access to similar opportunities. While they are aware of courses available to them, they do not know the precise steps needed to achieve their career goals.

Tutors create inclusive and respectful positive learning environments. Learners model the fundamental British values in their interactions with their tutors and peers. Learners work

collaboratively in group activities and listen considerately to the ideas of others.

Learners build their confidence, resilience and establish positive relationships with their peers and tutors. Most learners attend well. Learners studying family learning courses enjoy participating in activities with their children. They appreciate that these opportunities would otherwise not be possible for them due to their anxieties or finances. However, leaders do not provide learners with a sufficient range of activities that extend beyond the curriculum. While there is a well-established volunteer programme, very few learners take up this opportunity.

What it's like to be a learner and/or an apprentice at this provider

Learners feel a deep sense of community and belonging. A significant number of learners live in areas of deprivation, are from minority ethnic groups, are on low incomes or have barriers to their learning and/or mental health. They value the care and acceptance that they receive from staff.

Learners appreciate that they are taught by dedicated and passionate staff, who motivate them to succeed. Staff use their training in learning difficulties and disabilities to support learners to access education and remain in learning. Learners mostly benefit from effective teaching because tutors complete additional training to improve their practice in their own time. However, this has a negative impact on tutors' workload.

Learners build the essential knowledge and skills that they need to enable them to achieve their personal and/or career goals. Learners studying level 2 functional skills English gain a secure understanding of imperative verbs, adverbs and alliteration and demonstrate this effectively in class discussions.

Learners are supported to achieve their qualifications and move on to higher level courses. However, most do not receive structured advice and guidance to help plan the steps needed to enter employment.

Learners feel safe in their classes and online. They know the importance of not sharing passwords or using public Wi-Fi to access personal bank accounts.

Learners value the courses and support that they receive that makes a significant and positive difference to their lives. Learners studying English as a second or other language build friendships in their community and are able to make doctor's appointments. Learners who are care leavers acquire the vital skills that they need to live independently. Leaders provide learners who attend a cookery course with an air fryer so that they can prepare meals for themselves. Too few learners are aware of additional opportunities that are available to them.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that tutors receive training to further improve their teaching skills so that learners receive a consistently high standard of teaching.
 - Leaders should provide learners with a planned and well-structured programme of careers information, advice and guidance so that they know the precise steps that they need to take to achieve their career aspirations.
 - Leaders should ensure that the curriculum offers helpful additional opportunities to support each learner based on their needs and goals.
 - Leaders should carefully monitor the workload and wellbeing of staff to ensure that staff feel valued and have the time that they need to complete professional development activities.
 - Leaders should evaluate the inclusion strategy to make proactive and evidence-informed adaptations to further strengthen their approach to inclusion.
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About this inspection

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with leaders and managers, learners, tutors, learning support staff and advisory board members during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the provider:

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council manages its skills and tailored learning provision within the council's adult learning service. The adult learning service offers a range of accredited and non-accredited courses.

The provider operates in Bury and learning mostly takes place in an adult learning centre in the town. The provider also offers courses from community venues, including schools, across the borough.

At the time of the inspection, there were 670 adult learners studying skills and tailored learning courses. The large majority of learners studied courses in English for speakers of other languages, digital skills, numeracy and literacy. Just over half of learners on skills courses studied courses at entry level. Just over a quarter of learners on skills courses studied courses at level 1. The remaining learners studied courses at pre-entry level or level 2. The provider offered tailored learning in family learning, digital skills and a range of mental health courses.

Head of Service: Joanne Hatton

Lead inspector:

Zoe Ibbotson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:


Kim Bleasdale, His Majesty's Inspector

Alastair Mollon, His Majesty's Inspector

Alison Humphreys, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 25 November 2025

Number of learners

Total learners

670

Adult learning programmes

670

Percentage of learning aims successfully achieved

Education programmes for young people

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	100	83	Above
2022/23	89	81	Close to average
2021/22	S	81	S

'This provider' and 'national average' figures are taken from the publicly available DfE achievement rates. Where the DfE have suppressed the figures, usually due to small cohorts, this has been mirrored in the Report Card and will be shown by an 'S'.

Adult learning programmes

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	87	87	Close to average
2022/23	87	87	Close to average
2021/22	88	86	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other providers can learn from it.

Strong standard

The provider reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The provider is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The provider needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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