Inspection of Birmingham City Council

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 June 2024

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Adult learning programmes	**Good**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Birmingham City Council is a large community learning and skills provider, in Birmingham. Through its adult education service, it provides a range of accredited and non-accredited courses for adult learners. Courses range from pre-entry level to level 3 and are taught across nine main centres and 97 outreach venues located in areas of high deprivation across the city of Birmingham.

At the time of the inspection, there were 4,302 learners studying a variety of full- and part-time courses. Of these, 2,844 were studying courses at entry level. There were 1,235 learners studying on community learning courses.

The largest subject areas taught are related to preparation for learning and work, which includes 894 learners studying on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses, 308 learners studying mathematics and 138 learners studying English. Other large subject areas include courses related to information and communication technology (ICT), and health, public services and care.

The provider does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Learners value the education and training they receive. They are highly motivated and embrace the opportunity to develop new knowledge and skills that will help them to achieve their personal and employment goals.

Learners' attendance is high across all courses. Managers and teachers set high expectations for attendance and follow up on non-attendance swiftly.

Learners develop their confidence and character. Learners on community ESOL courses practise using public transport to visit the city library. They build their resilience and can travel independently around the city.

Learners treat each other and their teachers with dignity and respect. Teachers encourage learners to appreciate different cultures. Learners participate in celebrations such as Christmas and Eid and enjoy sharing different types of food from their own cultures with their peers.

Leaders, managers, centre staff and teachers provide calm and positive learning environments. Learning centres are safe places located in some of Birmingham's most deprived areas. This allows many learners who have been furthest away from education and training to access education. Almost all learners successfully complete their course and achieve their qualifications.

Teachers discuss topics such as radicalisation and extremism with learners. Most learners can explain what radicalisation might look like, including changes in a person's behaviour and becoming isolated from friends and family. ESOL learners are taught how they might identify and help a person experiencing domestic abuse. However, learners' understanding of the potential risks posed by knife crime in and around Birmingham is underdeveloped.

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

Leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculums they provide. They work with stakeholders, such as the West Midlands Combined Authority, local schools and local community-based charities, to design courses that support local skills priority areas. They strategically select locations to teach courses in the city which provide ease of access and remove barriers for adult learners. Leaders work with primary schools to provide parents with English courses to develop their reading skills so that they can read to their children and support them in their education.

Leaders have appropriate arrangements in place for governance, through an advisory board. Members of the board are suitably experienced and knowledgeable. They work closely with leaders to ensure they meet their statutory responsibilities. Leaders provide the board with detailed and useful information relating to the quality of education learners receive. This enables the board to hold leaders to account. Board members receive updates on the progress of improvement initiatives

to understand how improvements are being made, and the impact that these changes are having on the experience of learners.

Managers and teachers design and order their curriculums so that learners build on their knowledge and skills over time. In entry 3 ESOL writing, learners learn how to use adjectives, how to structure a sentence and how to use paragraphs to develop their writing, before moving on to more complex concepts such as proofreading and editing their own or others' written work. Learners develop useful new knowledge and skills. On ICT in business courses, learners who have never used a computer before can now confidently use formulas in Excel spreadsheets and create digital presentations with music backdrops.

Teachers provide effective support for learners with additional learning needs. Learners who need it are given in-class support by a learning assistant. Consequently, learners with additional learning needs achieve in line with their peers.

Teachers are well qualified and experienced for the subjects they teach. During lessons, teachers use a range of effective teaching strategies to help learners remember what they have learned and apply it. For example, teachers on ESOL courses ask learners to practise and repeat their oral pronunciation skills, sounding out letters across different words.

Teachers provide learners with helpful feedback that tells them how to improve their work. In IT for business, feedback helps learners to improve and reduce the length of the Excel formulas they produce so that they become shorter and more effective.

Teachers collect information about what learners already know and can do at the start of their course. They support learners to identify their personal development areas, such as improving confidence, working with others and self-management. However, teachers do not use this information to set meaningful targets for learners. As a result, too often learners do not understand what they need to do to improve.

Leaders and teachers signpost learners to a range of careers advice and guidance. Learners are invited to careers events, and careers advisers visit lessons to talk to learners. In most instances, learners are aware of the next level of study. However, too many learners are not clear on what they need to do to reach and succeed in their chosen careers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure teachers use information about what learners already know and can do at the start of their course to set meaningful targets so that learners understand what they need to do to improve.
- Ensure that learners understand how to protect and keep themselves safe in their local areas.
- Ensure that learners whose courses are designed to support them into employment receive careers education, information, advice and guidance so that they understand what they need to do to reach and succeed in their chosen careers.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50213
Address	Floor 1, Library of Birmingham Centenary Square Broad Street Birmingham B1 2ND
Contact number	0121 303 4318
Website	www.learnbaes.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Ilgun Yusuf
Provider type	Local authority - community learning and skills
Date of previous inspection	12 to 15 March 2019
Main subcontractors	n/a

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of quality improvement and learner services, 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

Rachel Clark, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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William Baidoe-Ansah	Ofsted Inspector
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