

Westminster Adult Education Service

Local authority

Inspection dates 15–18 March 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- A high proportion of learners and apprentices achieve their qualifications, course targets and personal learning goals.
- Learners and apprentices receive very good support from tutors and assessors for their learning and to help them overcome the barriers to learning that they encounter in their everyday lives.
- Learners with learning difficulties and/or disability receive very good support from their tutors to help them make good progress with their learning, with their personal learning goals and developing independence.
- Managers ensure that learners have very well maintained and high-quality learning resources and facilities in which to learn.
- Most teaching, learning and assessment helps learners and apprentices to make good progress and develop a wide range of vocational and life skills. Teaching in most vocational courses helps learners to improve their English and mathematical skills.
- Teachers' and managers' high expectations ensure that learners and apprentices develop very good attitudes and skills for employment.
- Governors, leaders and managers have a very thorough understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the provision; they work effectively to secure improvements and they monitor their progress in achieving improvement actions thoroughly.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- A small minority of current apprentices and learners are not making good progress and are not on target to achieve their qualifications with the planned timescale.
- Learners' attendance at, and punctuality to, lessons are not yet high enough.
- Learners and apprentices do not yet have a thorough enough understanding of British values and how to keep themselves safe from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Westminster Adult Education Service is a division of the Growth, Planning and Housing department within Westminster City Council and is a direct provider of adult learning programmes and apprenticeships for those living in the borough and from neighbouring boroughs. The provision is delivered from three main centres in the borough and up to 80 venues in the local community. The service offers both courses that lead to qualifications and courses that are non-accredited, with approximately 10,000 learners annually. The majority of learners study courses in English or mathematics, with the remainder studying a range of vocational courses including creative and visual arts, hairdressing, make-up, fashion, childcare, health and social care and programmes for learners with learning difficulties and disability.
- Just over two thirds of school leavers locally achieve five GCSEs at grades A* to C. Four-fifths of the local population are qualified to level 2, which is significantly higher than the national rate. About one in 10 of the working age population in the borough are not working, of which about a fifth have no qualifications. The rate of unemployment in the local area is slightly above the national rate and that for London. Westminster has a higher percentage of employment and support allowance (ESA) claimants than the London average and about half of ESA claimants have mental health problems. About a third of the local population does not have English as a first or second language and about half were not born in the United Kingdom.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Train tutors and assessors to set learners and apprentices clear, specific and achievable targets for improvement to enable them to make the full progress of which they are capable. Monitor learners' and apprentices' achievement of their targets frequently to ensure they are achieved fully and on time.
- Improve further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by training tutors to plan and teach lessons that enable learners to fulfil their potential and make rapid progress with their learning and skills development. Ensure teachers are sufficiently skilled at developing learners' mathematics skills more consistently in vocational subjects.
- Improve further learners' attendance at and punctuality to lessons by setting clear and specific expectations at the start of courses and intervening swiftly when their attendance and punctuality decline. Support learners who do not attend frequently and on time to overcome their barriers to high rates of attendance.
- Develop rapidly tutors' confidence and expertise in extending learners' knowledge of British values and how to protect themselves from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Governors, leaders and managers ensure that strategic plans for the future of Westminster Adult Education Services (WAES) are integrated well with the broader council 'City for All' priorities; they include plans to respond to future funding challenges. They maintain high-quality facilities and, as a result, learners benefit from very good, well-resourced learning environments.
- Managers have developed good links with a wide range of partners and employers, including the Westminster Work and Skills Board, which they use effectively to ensure that the courses on offer meet the skills needs of employers well. Managers' good links with a broad range of community organisations ensure that community needs are met. For example, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses are provided at community venues and are highly valued by learners and partners.
- All WAES staff ensure learners from a very diverse range of backgrounds and abilities work harmoniously; they support each other to succeed. Managers have ensured that every learner has the opportunity to succeed by ensuring that tutors, and where appropriate learning support assistants, help learners to make good progress. Learners understand the importance of equality of opportunity and valuing diversity but managers have not yet ensured that their awareness and understanding of British values is sufficiently well developed.
- Leaders and managers set high expectations for the performance of teachers and have focused particularly well on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Staff reflect these high expectations and work effectively and continuously to improve their performance. Managers ensure that tutors who need to improve their performance are supported by advanced learning coaches and through appropriate training to improve quickly. This support starts immediately after managers' observations of lessons, which focus very effectively on learning and the progress made by learners.
- Through their rigorous self-assessment, managers have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the provision and the areas that require further improvement. They use the views of learners, staff and subcontractors well. Senior leaders have developed thorough and effective plans for improvement from self-assessment judgements.
- Subcontracted provision, which comprises apprenticeships and a small number of traineeships, is managed well. The WAES manager for this provision rigorously reviews subcontractors' performance at monthly meetings with each subcontractor. Where performance levels fall below demanding targets, funding is withheld until performance improves. The manager also assures the quality of teaching, learning and assessment well through observations of teaching and learning and reviews of observation records and apprentices' portfolios of work.
- Managers set high expectations for the development of learners' English and mathematics skills. As a result, most tutors focus well on developing learners' written and spoken English skills during their courses. Tutors' development of learners' mathematics skills, other than on discrete mathematics courses, is not as well developed and requires further improvement.
- Managers monitor learners' progression to employment and further learning closely and evaluate learners' improvements in developing their self-confidence. They use this information to evaluate the effectiveness of individual courses and the range of courses in helping learners to gain and sustain employment, engage in further learning or volunteer in their communities.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - A well-established and very effective board of governors provides good support and challenge to help leaders and managers continually improve the performance of the service. Governors have a broad range of relevant skills which allows them to contribute effectively to the development of the service.
 - During termly meetings of the governors' performance review committee they review a range of relevant reports and data which enable them to develop a clear understanding of the progress managers are making towards improvement targets. This enables them to ask managers challenging questions and make helpful suggestions to enable further improvement.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Managers undertake safeguarding checks on all staff who work with children or vulnerable adults and keep a complete central record of these checks. Designated safeguarding managers are trained appropriately in safeguarding and in the duty to prevent radicalisation and extremism; all staff receive effective awareness training. Learners are aware of how to raise concerns or complaints; managers keep comprehensive records which show that appropriate action is taken when concerns are raised. Actions include working closely and effectively with council safeguarding and 'Prevent' officers.

Managers also ensure that the subcontractors have appropriate safeguarding checks in place.

- Most learners know how to keep themselves safe online and are sufficiently aware of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Managers have been slow to develop teaching materials to enable tutors to broaden and deepen learners' understanding further, particularly in the context of the communities where they live. Learners, nevertheless, know who to contact if they have any concerns because they are well briefed during induction and there are posters in every classroom to remind them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Tutors motivate and enthuse learners and maintain their interest in lessons by organising stimulating activities. For example, learners on childcare courses share openly with each other their experiences in the workplace to plan and create play areas for children in a nursery setting. Apprentices enjoy learning and participate with enthusiasm to give imaginative mini-presentations and to help each other learn new skills.
- Tutors adapt the content of learning well to support and challenge learners of different levels. For example, learners of varying ability levels in art and design learn new drawing and painting techniques to produce self-portraits and make rapid progress; less experienced learners take photos of themselves to paint from, while more-able learners use a greater range of colours to paint skin tones. They are proud of how they have improved the standard of their art work.
- Experienced and skilled tutors use their teaching expertise and sound knowledge of their subject to ensure all learners understand and make good progress. They use questioning skilfully to involve learners fully and build their understanding sensitively, by supporting those who lack confidence and providing harder activities or questions for those who are able to respond with greater accuracy.
- Learners on hairdressing courses are motivated well by their tutors; learners are enthusiastic and perform well in practical lessons. For example, in a well-paced hairdressing lesson, learners were trained to cut, colour and curl hair to a high standard and they received helpful verbal feedback from their tutor on how to improve their skills further for the workplace.
- In a small minority of instances, tutors do not plan learning well and learners become bored and uninterested, limiting the amount of progress they make. A few apprentices lose interest due to repetitive content, insufficient involvement in and limited assessment of their understanding.
- Not enough tutors complete learners' progress reviews in sufficient detail to help them improve their skills, achieve targets or develop the standard of their work further. Tutors' reviews of progress are not always timely and are often no more than a record of encouraging statements or a confirmation of achieving the units of a qualification. Targets set by tutors are often too broad and not precise enough to inform learners of steps to take to improve their work. Learners do not always have a clear understanding of their learning targets and plans.
- Specialist staff and tutors offer good information, advice and guidance and complete a thorough analysis and assessment of learners' support needs at the start of their course. They identify any extra help a learner may need at this early stage and this results in dedicated support and assistive equipment being made available for those who need extra help. Learners at all centres benefit from impartial careers guidance to inform their future plans.
- Learners with learning difficulties and/or disability achieve their learning targets and goals very well. Learning support assistants provide intensive support in class and learners have access to signers, enlarged text, text converted to symbols and a good range of assistive technology, which all helps them participate enthusiastically in lessons. Tutors set learners specific targets that assist them in achieving their short- and long-term learning and personal development goals.
- Staff provide good support to develop learners' life skills and enable them to operate with greater independence. For example, learners receive effective advice on accessing appropriate health services and family learning provision supports learners to develop a good range of parenting skills to support their children at school.
- Learners increase their awareness of equality of opportunity, diversity, and values of the communities in which they live and work well. For example, ESOL learners discuss the reasons for celebrating St Patrick's Day, and in a childcare lesson learners confidently discuss the need to cater for the dietary requirements of children of different nationalities. Floristry learners research and prepare appropriate floral displays for weddings from different cultural backgrounds.
- Learners develop a good range of language skills and improve their communication and literacy well. For example, learners in an art lesson evaluated the work of famous artists and related their findings to the development of their own technical skills. Tutors provide constructive written feedback to learners and place much emphasis on providing helpful tips on how to improve spelling, punctuation and grammar.

- Tutors are placing an increased focus on developing learners' mathematics skills in lessons. For example, learners in an ESOL class calculated journey times to various destinations. However, too few tutors are developing learners' mathematics skills consistently well in their vocational subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

- Learners, especially those for whom English is not their first language, make very significant improvements in their self-confidence as a result of developing their English skills. As a consequence of improving their self-confidence and English skills, they are able to play a more effective part in community and family life.
- Teachers have very high expectations of what their learners can achieve. The vast majority respond very positively to these high expectations, by working effectively in lessons to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Learners receive good-quality careers advice and guidance from their teachers and other support staff which enables them to make good progress into their next level of learning or into employment.
- Apprentices develop relevant skills for their job roles as a result of good on- and off-the-job training; in a minority of cases apprentices find the training too easy as tutors do not take sufficient account of their prior experience. Apprentices progress well from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships or into permanent employment on completion of their course; a high proportion of apprentices receive promotions, pay rises or additional responsibilities as a result of the skills they develop.
- Learners and apprentices develop the behaviours required in the workplace well; they behave very respectfully in college and community learning environments towards each other and towards tutors. Learners from a wide range of backgrounds and communities work very effectively together in classrooms, practical teaching areas and social spaces.
- Learners and apprentices develop the English skills required for their subject well. Tutors are not yet sufficiently adept at developing learners' mathematics skills in vocational lessons well enough. Learners taking courses in English and mathematics achieve their qualifications at a high rate.
- While improving, learners' attendance at, and punctuality to, lessons is not yet high enough. Teachers monitor their learners' attendance closely and they set them targets for improvement where their attendance is not yet high enough. A minority of learners on very short courses miss significant portions of their learning when they are late to lessons, which limits the progress they make.

Outcomes for learners are good

- The vast majority of learners make very good progress from their starting points on both qualification and non-qualification courses. The skills and knowledge they gain from their courses enables most learners to progress to the next level of learning, to employment or to more substantial qualifications.
- A very large proportion of learners on courses that lead to qualifications are successful, including those learners who study for qualifications in English and mathematics. In 2014/15, all apprentices, including those studying with subcontractors, achieved their qualifications and a high proportion of learners studying for GCSEs in English or mathematics achieved grades A* to C.
- Those learners taking courses that do not lead to qualifications are very successful in achieving the course aims and their personal learning goals. Those on courses to improve their English and mathematics make very significant improvements in their confidence to use these skills in their daily lives and are able to apply for jobs or help their children with their schoolwork more effectively.
- Learners who have severe or moderate learning difficulties or disability make very good progress towards independent living. They achieve a wide range of personal learning targets to improve their communication skills, their conduct and their ability to live independently.
- Learners produce good standards of written and practical work which meet, or in many cases exceed, the level of the course and the requirements of their qualification. For example, level 3 ceramics learners produce very high-quality pots, vases and containers, which they decorate to a very high standard using a wide range of techniques, following extensive research and planning.
- Current classroom- and community-based learners are making good progress towards achieving their qualifications. However, a minority of current apprentices are not making sufficient progress to achieve their qualifications within the planned timescale.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes

are good

- About 5,500 adult learners are on a range of part-time courses at WAES main sites across the borough and in community-based venues. Approximately two fifths of these learners are following an ESOL course. 1,223 learners are currently following distance learning courses and 1,137 are enrolled on vocational programmes.
- In the majority of lessons, learners enjoy their learning, work at a good pace and benefit considerably from the extensive teaching expertise and subject knowledge of their tutors to improve their skills, gain confidence and make good progress.
- Tutors have high expectations of their learners, which motivates them to work hard, concentrate well in lessons and to practise and use their skills outside of lessons. Tutors set learners homework tasks frequently and learners comment on how they have developed their research skills as well as becoming more independent in their learning. Learners are encouraged to mark each other's work and provide honest feedback to other members of the group. For example, in a floristry lesson learners evaluated the displays made by other members of the group, resulting in learners increasing their ability to analyse and think critically.
- Tutors use a range of well-planned activities and varied, high-quality resources successfully to motivate learners and increase their knowledge, understanding and skills for work. Tutors use information learning technologies well. For example, in a functional skills English lesson learners developed writing skills by devising instructions for how to travel from the centre to a job interview at Heathrow airport; learners used their smartphones to research the route as well as the cost of the journey on public transport.
- In the large majority of courses, learners develop a wide range of skills required to improve their job prospects and participate independently in everyday life. Learners in ESOL lessons develop particularly good speaking and listening skills. For example, several ESOL learners now have the confidence and the language skills to visit the doctor on their own, while others now have the confidence to talk to their child's teacher. Parents in family learning sessions increase their understanding of how to develop their child's reading skills well by learning how to use open and closed questions when reading with their children to find out how well their child understands stories.
- In the majority of lessons, tutors use a wide range of techniques to check how much progress learners are making. Tutors' oral feedback is constructive and in ESOL lessons tutors reinforce learners' correct pronunciation very effectively. Tutors mark learners' work consistently, correcting spelling, grammatical and other errors. Learners find this particularly useful as they feel more confident in their ability to spell correctly when helping their children with their written homework. In ESOL and English lessons, tutors provide learners with helpful spelling strategies to help them record and practise spelling words until they have learned them thoroughly.
- Learners on distance learning programmes make good progress. Vocational tutors are very experienced, monitor individual learners' progress well and provide detailed feedback on their assignments. The most-able learners are encouraged to extend their knowledge further by, for example, using specific websites for additional study.

Apprenticeships

are good

- At the time of inspection, 515 apprentices were in training: 353 at level 2 and 162 at level 3. The very large majority are over 19 years old and female; most apprentices are training in health and social care subjects, with a few training in customer service, business and administration and the children and young people's workforce.
- Trainers and assessors have high expectations of their apprentices and what they can achieve. As a result, a very large proportion of apprentices achieve their qualification. Managers work well with employers and apprentices to plan and implement training that meets their skills development needs. Employers speak highly of the flexible and extensive support that managers provide, for example by scheduling visits on days when the workplace is less busy. This enables their apprentices to make good progress in their qualification framework while continuing to make a positive contribution to the organisation in which they work. However, a small minority of current apprentices are not making fast enough progress to ensure they complete their programme within the time planned.
- Apprentices work hard in training sessions and they refine their practical skills and develop their knowledge well by doing challenging tasks. For example, in a health and social care session, apprentices

demonstrated how to measure blood pressure and they responded well to their peers' questions about the technique. In a small minority of training sessions, apprentices make slower progress than they could because trainers spend too much time talking and ask too few questions to check individual apprentices' learning.

- Apprentices enjoy their learning. As a result of the good support they receive from their trainers, assessors and peers, apprentices, several who have not been in formal education for some time, have regained their interest in learning. Trainers and assessors design training sessions that enable apprentices to share their extensive work experience and knowledge well for the benefit of all in the group. For example, apprentices who administer medicine at work compared the methods they use to ensure the safety of their clients. In the few instances where trainers do not monitor apprentices' attention closely enough, learners do not maintain a consistent level of interest.
- Standards of apprentices' written work in their portfolios are good. Assessors provide detailed and thorough feedback that enables the large majority of apprentices to make good progress in completing assessments. In training sessions, a strong focus on the development of apprentices' writing and speaking enables them to develop their written and oral communication skills further. For example, apprentices fluently explain the features and benefits of person-centred care in a residential care home.
- Assessors review learners' individual progress frequently and set specific targets for work completion or further learning; assessors provide positive feedback that helps apprentices stay motivated. Assessors' records of workplace visits to their apprentices are thorough and describe well the good skills for work that the apprentices develop, such as giving presentations to senior managers in a business setting.

Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	11,399
Principal/CEO	Barbara Holm
Website address	www.waes.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	9	2,979	12	2,030	2	156	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
Number of traineeships	1	162	5	347	6	509		
	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		25		25			
Number of learners aged 14-16	0							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Concerto Services ■ JFC Training and Consultancy ■ Liral Viget Training ■ London Vocational College ■ Widows and Orphans International 							

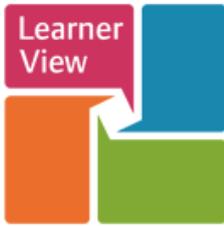
Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Richard Pemble, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mark Shackleton	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kanwaljit Dhillon	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Clary	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Elliott	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the deputy head of service, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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