

# Adult Education College for Bexley

## Adult and community learning

<b>Inspection dates</b>		24–28 June 2013
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is good because:

- Learners enjoy their studies and achieve well.
- The outstanding ethos of care and support that pervades the college enables learners to develop greater confidence and self-esteem, improve their social skills and make their first steps towards employment.
- Tutors teach engaging and well-resourced lessons that ensure learners develop the knowledge and skills they need to make progress in life and work.
- Learners are developing good English, mathematical and functional skills because of the challenging strategy that leaders and staff have developed.
- Learners' needs are met very well by a flexible and responsive curriculum that gives good progression opportunities.
- Support and guidance staff use their knowledge and experience very well to provide learners with good information and advice on further study opportunities.
- Leaders have significantly improved the leadership and management of the provision. As a result, all staff work together extremely well towards a common vision.
- The strategic board knows the college very well and instils a college-wide culture of high expectations.
- Leaders focus exceptionally well on meeting the needs of the borough and its citizens.

#### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Outcomes for a small minority of learners are below national averages.
- Not all learners make enough progress in relation to their starting point.
- Tutors do not use sufficiently well the records that learners keep about their own learning in their individual learning journey (ILJ) to review progress and set new and challenging personal targets to improve future learning.
- Managers have not yet fully implemented improvements in curriculum planning and performance management.

## Full report

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

- Set and regularly review challenging targets for learners so that managers and staff are able to measure more accurately the progress that learners make.
- Further improve the quality of taught sessions through activities that ensure that all learners are always fully active and sufficiently challenged.
- Make better use of data about learning goals so that managers and staff are more clearly aware of the wider measures of progression.
- Implement fully improvements in curriculum planning and performance management.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- Outcomes for learners reflect the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and are good. In 2011/12, success rates for those learners on courses leading to external qualifications improved significantly. Current data show that success rates continue to improve, although in a minority of subject areas improvement is slow. Most learners are achieving well, considering their starting points.
- Learners make good progress. Many begin their learning with no, or few, formal qualifications. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for and make significant progress that is celebrated as part of an inclusive culture. Most learners attain their learning goals, and meet the sometimes challenging personal, social and skills targets set during initial assessment.
- Leaders and staff ensure that a wide range of learners engage successfully with learning. An increasing number of men have been recruited to courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and achieve well. Men are also responding well to the range of targeted programmes offered in family learning. The number of Black, Asian and minority ethnic learners is representative of the communities served by the Adult Education College for Bexley; they also achieve well. For many learners successful involvement in learning helps them to play a more active role in their communities.
- In most subject areas learners develop good English, mathematics and functional skills. Staff use informative and easy-to-use visual planning tools, known in the college as 'trees', to identify more clearly where these skills can be embedded in their teaching and learning plans. Learners have benefited from this work.
- Learners develop greater confidence and self-esteem, improve their social skills, and appreciate the personal and economic benefits that engagement in learning brings to their everyday lives. For example, one long-term unemployed learner who found the return to learning emotionally challenging, developed the confidence to apply for, and was successful in gaining, employment after a six-week vocational preparation programme. Learners are happy and feel secure.
- Learners' work is of a high standard. Tutors and support staff help learners to produce work that meets academic, vocational or professional standards.
- Learners develop good practical and technical skills, for example in jewellery, glass making, woodworking and hairdressing, that help them progress in life and work. They talk confidently and enthusiastically about their work.
- Staff help learners to develop good skills and independence to prepare them for work, promotion or further study.

**The quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, as reflected in the overall good outcomes for learners. They make good progress and develop a wide range of practical, vocational or language skills and gain confidence to engage in further learning and to progress onto higher-level courses or employment opportunities.
- As a result of their tutors' high expectations, learners are motivated, proud of their work and develop high professional standards, for example when dealing with clients in a hairdressing salon. Learners often study and research subjects beyond the requirement of the course; for example, a group of family learning students researched different websites to identify the cost and design of nesting boxes for a woodwork class.
- The care and support for learners are outstanding. A team of additional learning support workers, welfare and immigration advisers and counsellors provide a comprehensive support package to learners. Learners receive good individual support in class to help them progress and achieve well. In ESOL and family learning, tutors offer good additional support outside the classroom, increasing learners' confidence and willingness to attend classes. Learners support each other well.
- Tutors use their high level of skills and knowledge well to engage learners and ensure they have a good understanding of the demands of their vocational sectors. Tutors structure lessons well, with a wide range of interesting learning activities which build on prior learning and extend learners' knowledge and skills very well.
- Tutors ensure that learners develop employability skills well, and in the better arts and craft lessons tutors skilfully develop learners' artistic talents in, for example, dance and singing. In a small minority of lessons tutors do not always plan activities that will ensure that all learners are always fully active and sufficiently challenged.
- Learners enjoy their learning. They eagerly join in with all activities, such as imaginative games that help them to develop their mathematical skills. Learners in family learning classes sensitively discuss difficulties in family relationships before identifying actions they could take to improve these.
- A large majority of tutors make very good use of learning resources and materials and use well-maintained information and learning technology (ILT) effectively to enhance learning.
- Tutors use assessment well to help learners make progress. In hair and beauty assessment, practices are fair and rigorous. In ESOL, initial and diagnostic assessments clearly identify learners' starting points. However, tutors do not sufficiently use the results of these assessments or self-assessments to set specific, individual learning targets or plan learning which will meet individual needs.
- Tutors do not use sufficiently well the records that learners keep about their own learning in their individual learning journey (ILJ) to review progress and set new and challenging personal targets to improve future learning. In family learning, learners use the ILJ very well to reflect on their learning and record their progress.
- Tutors monitor learners' progress during lessons well and correct errors effectively. They give learners constructive verbal feedback; however, too many tutors do not give learners written feedback on their work sufficiently swiftly to guide them on what they need to do to improve.
- Managers and staff have put in place a good strategy to support the development of learners' English language, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Tutors in hair and beauty make good use of especially designed learning materials and resources to develop learners' skills. However, tutors do not yet apply this approach rigorously in all subject areas. Learners make good progress in developing their ICT skills, both in class and through independent study.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Qualified and experienced education and career guidance workers provide learners with information and advice on further study opportunities. They support learners very effectively to apply for employment through curriculum vitae and job

search workshops in the open study centre. They visit all classes on request and liaise very effectively with tutors and managers across the college.

- Tutors and staff create a culture of respect and promote well equality and diversity. The majority of tutors use appropriate and timely opportunities to celebrate diversity in lessons. Tutors make effective use of the equality and diversity calendar as prompts for discussion. They also make effective use of an equality and diversity self-assessment checklist when planning their lessons.

## **Hairdressing and beauty**

### **Learning programmes for 19+ Community learning**

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Success rates are also good and have improved significantly year-on-year, from a very low starting point, over the last three years. They compare well with similar providers. All learners enjoy their learning, particularly the hands-on practical sessions. Tutors ensure very well that learners' individual needs are met in lessons so that each learner has the experience they need. However, tutors' lesson plans do not reflect so well this interaction with learners.
- Retention is good. Current retention data for intermediate level hairdressing show a significant increase to above national average. Retention for beauty therapy has declined, but is still above national averages. Current learners attend well and make good progress.
- Assessment is fair, rigorous and meets the awarding body requirements. Tutors ensure that learners understand clearly the assessment criteria. Tutors give informative, constructive verbal feedback to develop learners' understanding and encourage progress during practical assessment sessions. However, tutors' written comments on learners' assignments are often too vague and do not inform learners how to improve or progress from good to excellent.
- Learners' standards of practical work are high; for example, when colouring hair, learners display good hand skills. High expectations from tutors mean that learners are confident, dress and behave professionally and interact appropriately with clients. Learners are well organised and manage their portfolios well. Learners use information and communication technology very effectively for research and use colourful illustrations of salon products to enrich their work.
- Staff use their high level of industry qualifications and experience well to help learners develop skills and knowledge. They are enthusiastic and use this knowledge effectively to enhance and enrich learners' understanding by referring to real-life industrial practices.
- Target setting in learner progress documents is insufficiently detailed. It is too reflective of previous learning and not sufficiently well focused on specific future targets. This means that learners do not always complete target dates and monitor progress sufficiently well in their own reviews.
- Tutors use a vocationally relevant basic skills resource pack to help learners develop good English, mathematics and functional skills. Learners are able to see clearly the relevance to hairdressing. However, tutors do not always correct spelling and grammatical errors in learners' assignments.
- Tutors give learners good advice and guidance about their next steps so that they know the progression routes available to them. Many are taking advantage of the short bridging courses in advanced techniques such as colour work. Learners value these short programmes as a progression route to advanced level hairdressing training.
- Support for learning is good. Tutors provide swift and highly effective support to help learners make progress. Learners speak highly of, and value the support given by, their tutors. For example, staff supported a learner who was at risk of leaving her course and encouraged her to complete her studies. She is now looking forward to a career in hairdressing.

- Staff promote equality and diversity well so that learners understand how equality and diversity is relevant to them. For example, learners celebrate diversity by acknowledging events and days that are significant to a range of cultures in their work. Staff ensure that learners feel that their cultures are valued and respected. For example, tutors responded sensitively to a female learner's request to move into an all-female class.

## English for speakers of other languages

### Learning programmes for 19+ Community learning

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and reflect learners' good development of confidence, and language and employability skills. Learners make good progress. Tutors are suitably qualified, have good subject expertise and enthuse learners well. They have high expectations for their learners. As a result, learners are motivated, attend well and are punctual, despite some of them working during weekdays and many having childcare responsibilities.
- Tutors are welcoming and manage classroom-based learning well. They skilfully engage all learners. Learners are clear about what is expected, keen to contribute and share knowledge and ideas. In most lessons, they are encouraged to work collaboratively.
- In the best lessons, learners access a good variety of well-researched and presented materials to guide them. In these lessons, activities are well staged, kept at a challenging pace and learners are encouraged to correct errors. However, activities are often too controlled, with too little learner interaction so that learners do not always sufficiently practise how to respond quickly and naturally to what they hear.
- Tutors do not meet the needs of more able learners in mixed-ability classes sufficiently well. Extension activities are not readily available for faster learners while they wait for peers to finish their tasks.
- Tutors make good use of information and learning technology. They use the well-maintained equipment and the internet imaginatively to stimulate learning. For example, some learners enjoy listening to songs to develop their vocabulary and listening skills whilst others develop their confidence in spelling new words on the interactive whiteboards.
- Initial assessment is good, and is used to recruit learners to the most appropriate courses. Tutors use mock examinations in speaking and listening very effectively to prepare learners for formal examinations and to boost confidence. The majority of tutors monitor learner progress well in lessons and provide useful and timely verbal and written feedback to learners. However, individual targets are often not sufficiently specific to help learners understand what they need to do to improve their language skills.
- Learners benefit from good care, support and advice and from timely referrals for counselling or immigration advice. Tutors provide a wide range of additional support, such as help with writing or reading letters from the council, solicitors or children's schools. Advisers visit groups and, as a result, a quarter of learners have accessed one-to-one advice and guidance for support such as curriculum vitae writing and jobsearch. Learners are signposted well to extend skills in ICT, English or mathematics, resulting in good progression onto courses outside ESOL.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well in the classroom. Learners say they feel safe. On the majority of courses, learners have good opportunities to develop their knowledge of other cultures and of life in the United Kingdom. Learners enjoy their group activities on topics such as writing advertisements for dating agencies that cater for different groups of people such as lone parents, the over fifties, single men or divorcees.

## Community learning

### Learning programmes for 19+ Community learning

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good on community development programmes and outcomes for learners are improving. Tutors use a range of teaching strategies that supports well individual learner progression, maintains interest and motivates learners to achieve. This means that retention has improved. Current learners are making good progress in lessons.
- Learners of all ages and abilities are encouraged successfully to engage with community learning. They work well together in diverse mixed-ability classrooms, workshops and studios. Learners feel safe, and tutors make effective use of health and safety procedures to ensure that they remain safe.
- Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make exceptional progress and successfully gain new skills, as well as developing personal and social skills. These learners benefit from excellent support and a wide range of challenging activities. In outstanding sessions learners develop coordination, thinking, decision making and team building skills, as well as developing artistic talents in design, dance and singing.
- Tutors use well their good subject knowledge to engage learners and set high standards. Skilled tutor demonstrations provide learners with clear guidance on techniques and standard requirements. Learners develop good employability skills on craft courses. For example, some learners in jewellery making are now selling their products; one learner has changed occupation from carer to tiler following completion of a 'Do It Yourself' course.
- Tutors pay good attention to the individual needs of learners during lessons and enable learners to progress at their own pace to complete increasingly complex tasks. Effective deployment of learner support in class ensures all learners progress and maximise their potential. However, this is not always sufficiently well recorded in lesson plans and evaluations.
- Learning outcomes are not sufficiently detailed and are not used well by learners and tutors to record and review progress in ILJs. There is insufficient feedback to learners on how to improve; tutor comments are generally limited to encouragement and praise.
- Learners do not develop sufficiently well their English, mathematics and functional skills in community learning. Tutors do not plan well for the development of English, mathematics and functional skills in their lessons.
- Tutors use ILT well to support learning in classrooms, workshops and studios. In the better sessions learners use digital cameras to record work in progress as well as final products to build up a portfolio of work. Tutors refer learners to appropriate websites to gain information and ideas for designing products. However, tutors and learners do not use the college's virtual learning environment sufficiently to develop on-line portfolios or access resources that encourage more independent learning.
- Information, advice and guidance are good and staff direct learners to courses that meet their needs and interests. However, progression routes are not defined sufficiently well for learners to make informed choices about how they can develop further their knowledge, skills and interests.
- Tutors promote equality and diversity well in lessons. However, many tutors do not use opportunities to include topics and issues that arise naturally to develop further learners' understanding during their courses.



**Family learning****Learning programmes for 19+  
Community learning**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, as are the overall outcomes for learners. Retention rates are high. Achievement rates for learners on English and mathematics courses are particularly high. Tutors have high expectations of learners and motivate them very effectively, so that a large majority successfully progresses onto other courses or into employment.
- Learners enjoy their lessons and develop greater confidence. Classes in, for example, pottery or beauty that include their young or teenage children help learners to improve family relationships. They gain a wide range of skills in mathematics and English, and learn better how to manage difficult behaviour. They learn how their children are taught at school and are better able to help them with schoolwork.
- The care and support for learners are outstanding. All staff are readily available to learners and give them much individual attention and support for learning, welfare and counselling. Managers and tutors have particularly effective partnerships with a wide range of community organisations to recruit learners, and their children, into learning activities.
- Staff engage those most in need through an extensive programme of appealing and relevant activities extremely well. Tutors plan lessons well, with clear learning outcomes that include a wide range of practical learning activities to engage both adults and children. Adult learners enjoy educational games and activities which further their children's learning, for example identifying two and three-dimensional shapes and their properties. However, tutors do not always ensure that all learners fully participate or that those who complete a task receive an extension activity.
- Tutors make good use of a wide range of engaging learning resources. They prepare relevant handouts, for example by listing local organisations that support children with autism. They make good use of video clips and interactive whiteboards to enhance learning.
- Assessment processes are comprehensive. Staff use initial assessments well to identify learners' levels and needs. Tutors negotiate group learning targets well, but do not sufficiently identify individual targets. Learners use the ILJ effectively to reflect on their learning, record their progress, and consider their next step in learning.
- Tutors encourage independent learning through practical, written or web-based research tasks. They mark tasks promptly for spelling and grammar. Learners receive encouraging verbal feedback. Written feedback is insufficiently detailed and does not often tell learners what they need to do to improve.
- Information, advice and guidance services are good. All new learners receive clear initial information about courses and possible progression routes. Specialist guidance workers visit all adult classes and offer personalised guidance on further accredited learning opportunities and help with applying for employment.
- Tutors and support staff in family learning promote equality and diversity well across the curriculum. Male parents/carers are offered special courses for them and their young or teenage children. Learners attend regularly and return to attend when new courses are available. Tutors use the equality and diversity checklist effectively when planning their courses to ensure that their materials and topics meet the varied needs of targeted learners.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Good

- Outcomes for learners are improving as a result of a much greater strategic focus on the quality of provision. Following a significant organisation restructure at senior level, the college is led

exceptionally well. The vision for the college is clear and understood by all staff, who have a unity of purpose, resulting in much improvement.

- The strategic board, which includes senior leaders, councillors and other representatives, knows the college very well. It works extremely well to plan and deliver programmes, sets high standards, which are reflected throughout the organisation, and instils a college-wide culture of high expectations.
- Leaders focus well on outcomes for learners. Leaders have a detailed knowledge of how well learners are doing. They plan to develop further this knowledge by establishing learner representative posts on management boards. Governors hold senior managers to account well for their performance in meeting challenging performance and financial targets.
- College leaders focus well on performance management. Arrangements to monitor the quality of learning support are exceedingly rigorous, including specific observations of support staff activities. Managers have improved well the process to hold teaching staff to account. However, as the college is aware, in a few areas the improvements are not yet fully implemented.
- Continuing professional development for staff is good. Staff receive a wide range of additional training, such as that for dyslexia awareness and support, to ensure that they enhance the experience for learners. Staff development is usually linked well to observations. However, in a few curriculum areas, staff feel that their development is not sufficiently well related to their vocational area.
- Staff at all levels focus very well on making the best use of the resources available. They are proud of their locations and work hard to maintain them, for example caretaking staff regularly decorate premises. The college staff make good use of information and learning technologies and manage these very well. Plans to improve the resources to meet the needs of the borough better are well thought out and include a substantial capital investment.
- Staff use their good skills and knowledge well to provide learners with experiences that refer well to real world examples and commercial practice. Many staff have significant industry experience or are current practitioners. Many learning support staff are specialists in the subject being taught.
- Staff evaluate well the quality of provision. Individual curriculum area self-assessments are detailed and accurate and result in improvement. However, the overall self-assessment report is overly descriptive and lacks detail, particularly in terms of areas for improvement. Quality improvement plans are not sufficiently well linked to self-assessment. Actions are, monitored well. Plans are extremely ambitious but, given recent improvements, achievable.
- Leaders develop strategic plans, and partnerships, exceptionally well to meet the needs of the borough and its citizens. Planned changes to the provision, which include a relocation and restructuring of teaching and learning centres, are suited very well to the changing needs of the borough. This is a particular strength of the revised management and governance arrangements.
- The use of strategic information to plan curriculum provision has improved but is not yet fully embedded in all curriculum areas. Staff develop, and use well, good links with a wide range of agencies and local knowledge to inform their curriculum planning; for example, starting a GCSE Spanish course to which learners from Spanish conversation classes can progress.
- Leaders focus well on promoting equality and diversity. Their actions have ensured greater participation by under-represented groups, such as male learners and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. For example, in ESOL, the proportion of male learners has increased significantly over the last three years and now represents a third of the learners.
- Leaders have established a culture in which equality and diversity are promoted well in the classroom and learners have a good understanding of the topics. Incidents are exceedingly rare and learners treat each other with respect.
- Safeguarding is good. The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and display safe working practices. Staff focus well on health and safety and carry out detailed risk assessments for



rooms and activities. Managers make good use of tutors' activity specific knowledge to assess risks. However, room and activity risks are managed separately and managers do not ensure that they are linked sufficiently well to provide a complete picture of health and safety practice.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Adult Education College for Bexley

<p><b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b></p> <p>1: Outstanding                  2: Good                  3: Requires improvement                  4: Inadequate</p>	<b>Overall</b>	19+ Learning programmes	Community learning
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	2	2
Outcomes for learners	<b>2</b>	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>2</b>	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>2</b>	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Hairdressing and beauty therapy</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ESOL</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Community learning</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Family learning</b>	<b>2</b>

## Provider details

<b>Adult Education College for Bexley</b>	
<b>Type of provider</b>	Local authority
<b>Age range of learners</b>	19+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: 1
	Part-time: 5,927
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mr Stuart Crichton
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	April 2009
<b>Website address</b>	www.adultedbexley.org.uk

<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Full-time</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Part-time</b>	15	437	12	223	2	34	-	32
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	14							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	440							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							

## Additional socio-economic information

The Adult Education College for Bexley is a large community learning and skills provider based on two sites in the London Borough of Bexley. The college engages in outreach work in children's centres and community venues in the most economically deprived wards. The proportion of borough residents qualified to level 4 is small. Rates for staying on in education and training beyond the age of 16 are high, but aspirations to progress to higher education are low. The main employment in the area is in administration and secretarial services, in professional occupations and in health and social care. Increasing numbers of people are self-employed in the service sector. The number of pupils in schools in Bexley attaining five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics was above the national average in 2011/12, having risen slightly from the previous year.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Allan Christopher Jones HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the strategic manager for curriculum and quality as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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