

Bromley London Borough Council

Local authority

Inspection dates

7–10 February 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have been slow to address several issues identified at the previous inspection and to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessments.
- Tutors do not use a sufficiently wide range of strategies to assess learners' progress and development of skills and knowledge, relying too much on questioning techniques that are not always effective.
- Teaching on courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is not consistently good and learners make slower than expected progress.
- Tutors set targets that do not provide enough guidance to learners to develop the skills they need to help them achieve their career aims and personal goals.
- Courses where learners' attendance and punctuality are poor are not identified by managers, and tutors do not always work with learners to address the problems that affect their ability to attend regularly and on time.
- On too many courses in 2015/16, achievement rates declined to below the standards expected.

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers have successfully managed a significant transition, restructuring the adult learning programmes to align more closely with the council's overarching strategic mission.
- Bromley Adult Education College offers a good range of courses, in a wide variety of locations, ensuring good learning opportunities to the borough's most disadvantaged residents.
- Learners thoroughly enjoy their courses, gaining in self-confidence, developing new vocational and personal skills and making friends.
- Tutors' enthusiasm for, and knowledge of, their subjects inspires learners to commit to their studies and maintain their interests, and motivates them to make good progress.
- Learners demonstrate good knowledge about the topics taught and produce a high standard of practical work.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Bromley Adult Education College (BAEC) delivers adult and community learning provision and is part of the London Borough of Bromley. The mainstream provision has been consolidated to two sites: the Kentwood Centre, Penge, and the Poverest Centre, Orpington. Community learning programmes and family learning courses are offered in a range of primary schools, children's centres and the community centres at Mottingham and Cotmandene, along with other community venues. Bromley is one of the more prosperous areas of Greater London, but 2.5% of its areas are among the most deprived 5% in England.
- BAEC offers a range of vocational courses, ESOL courses from pre-entry to level 2 and a range of preparation for life and work courses for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. It also delivers English and mathematics provision from entry level to functional skills at level 2 and GCSE. Although the number of learners on accredited programmes at the main centres has decreased, an increasing number of learners are enrolling on community-based programmes. Unemployment continues to decline in the borough and the profile of those claiming benefits has changed; those remaining are often the furthest away from the job market.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers must ensure that they devote more of their time to the consistent application of comprehensive and rigorous arrangements to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and improve it.
- Increase the proportion of learners achieving ESOL qualifications by sharing the existing good teaching practices that are effective on other courses.
- Provide tutors with suitable training in a range of strategies and methods that they can use to assess accurately learners' progress and development.
- Ensure that tutors take a more consistent approach to setting and reviewing goals and targets that reflect learners' career aims and personal development objectives, as well as the activities needed to complete their courses.
- Make better use of data and management information to identify trends over time as well as areas of good practice and areas for improvement in:
 - learners' attendance and punctuality
 - the progression of learners to sustained positive destinations.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have not ensured sufficient improvement, and key aspects of provision are not yet good. Most notably, outcomes for learners still require improvement and learners' achievements are too low in a significant proportion of provision. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good or better, and aspects for improvement noted at the previous inspection have not been fully and successfully addressed.
- Leaders and managers have a good general understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement as presented in the largely accurate self-assessment report. They have identified mostly suitable actions in the quality improvement plan. However, progress in systematically addressing weaknesses and bringing about improvement are too slow. In some cases, this is because the focus on restructuring the service has denied managers adequate time to analyse performance data and the information they have. In other cases, arrangements to judge the quality of provision are not fully operational, or have been delayed due to lack of time.
- Managers do not have sufficiently comprehensive information about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Current arrangements, although planned to be improved, have not ensured that all tutors are observed in their lessons. As a result, managers lack important and specific information to help trigger actions for improvement. Lack of comprehensive quality assurance arrangements makes it difficult for managers to judge the rigour of observations and ensure that the quality improvement plans address the weaker aspects, including those noted in the previous inspection.
- Managers' systematic use and analysis of learners' performance requires improvement. Managers are making progress in producing helpful reports, but data such as learners' attendance and achievement is not sufficiently used to set targets and track improvement, or to identify trends.
- Leaders and managers have achieved much to help secure the future and sustainability of BAEC, both matching provision to a much reduced budget and ensuring that it now meets the needs of residents within the borough's most deprived areas. The latter addresses well an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- BAEC is now positively integrated with the work of the council and its management structures. Leaders' clear strategic vision and mission are now closely aligned with those of the council in pursuit of its key aims and objectives, including the 'Building a Better Bromley' strategy to help support the borough's most vulnerable residents.
- Leaders and managers have successfully managed the college's significant transition, with the closure of the previous main delivery centre, the ending of much leisure provision, substantial staff redundancies, the redistribution of courses and the much-accelerated provision of outreach community courses.
- Leaders and managers have put in place a much-simplified management structure for BAEC, aiding better communications and quicker management decisions. Tutors, who are all part time, comment positively on the way in which they and their learners are successfully moving on from the tribulations of the disruptive reorganisation to the

service. Tutors are managed well in their subject areas by the heads of centre.

- Recognising weaknesses with the process of lesson observations, leaders and managers have planned for the systematic use of 'learning walks' to help judge the quality of teaching and learning. They moderate the judgements and grades for the observations they do. Managers are working increasingly closely with neighbouring community learning services to share best practise and to carry out peer reviews of their provision.
- BAEC's partnerships, in the best interests of learners and its wider communities, are considerable. These include schools for family learning and mental health agencies and charities to develop learners' health and well-being. As the work of the college becomes better known to other council directorates, internal partnerships are beginning to enhance BAEC's opportunities to extend its curriculum to meet local needs and help disadvantaged residents.

The governance of the provider

- Governance of BAEC is now good, following improvements to the lines of accountability with the restructure of the service. The head of education for the borough, who is the head of service for BAEC, reports directly to the director of education who ensures that the strategy, direction and performance of BAEC are fully considered by the chief executive's directorate team. In parallel, the councillor portfolio holder for education oversees the work and performance of BAEC on behalf of elected members and reports on aspects of performance and strategy to the council's education select committee.
- The portfolio holder and the director of education work closely with the head of service, and her managers, to help ensure the most effective service for learners. They are knowledgeable about BAEC's work and have been crucial in shaping BAEC to its current form. They continue to devote significant time to ensuring full implementation of the new strategy and mission.
- The portfolio holder chairs the newly established community learning advisory consortium, designed to facilitate partnership working, both within the council and with other local bodies and agencies, in the best interests of learners.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding is well managed and implemented within the context of the borough's infrastructure for safeguarding. Managers understand their safeguarding responsibilities well and maintain very good links and partnership working with expert staff within the borough.
- Tutors and learners know what action to take should they be concerned about any safeguarding-related issue. Learners are successfully encouraged to raise any issues with staff.
- Leaders and managers are making sound progress with the implementation of their plans to fully introduce the 'Prevent' duty to staff. All permanent staff have received training appropriate to their role. Sessional tutors require more training. Learners' understanding of fundamental British values is superficial and not all are aware of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation in the communities where they live and work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Learners make slow progress in a significant minority of classes due to teaching and learning that require improvement. In ESOL classes, tutors do not plan sessions effectively to ensure that learners are suitably challenged to develop their skills, and often too little time is allowed between tasks to check that learning has taken place. In other classes, tutors allow too much time for open discussions and for learners to raise personal issues at the expense of planned teaching activities.
- In their use of assessment strategies, tutors fail to assess fully what learners are learning. Tutors on leisure courses rely too heavily on using simple questions, which often elicit superficial answers and do not go far enough to ensure learners' conceptual understanding. Tutors on English and mathematics programmes are better skilled at assessing learning.
- During individual assessments and reviews with learners, tutors capture relevant information about learners' personal circumstances. However, too many individual goals and targets that tutors set with learners only focus on completing course tasks and requirements. Tutors do not set targets that help learners to deepen their knowledge or to develop the skills they need for their progression or personal development. As a result, tutors' ability to plan for and support learners is adversely affected.
- Tutors' reviews of learners on a few vocational programmes do not take full account of learners' progress to date. Targets set by tutors are not regularly updated and therefore learners are not always clear about what they have to achieve next in order to remain on track or prepare for their next steps.
- Enthusiastic and knowledgeable tutors engage particularly well with learners, ensuring that classes are lively, learners are attentive and that they are enjoying learning. Learners are eager to develop their skills and knowledge. Tutors skilfully use a variety of activities that encourage everyone to participate. For example, learners with learning difficulties learn about counting money by playing board games. In family learning programmes, tutors involve parents and their children through making paper crafts together.
- Learners develop good practical, vocational and technical language skills on leisure and other courses that lead to a qualification. Tutors carefully demonstrate techniques that learners rapidly acquire themselves. For example, in cookery classes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, learners prepare ingredients and use utensils correctly, and in information technology, learners use industry standard software to create animated presentations.
- Feedback to learners is good. Tutors give specific and insightful written feedback on homework and course assignments that helps learners identify how to improve further. In the majority of classes, tutors affirm and frequently praise learners for the progress they make.
- Learners develop and improve their mathematical skills. Tutors integrate mathematics very well into teaching leisure subjects and this develops learners' understanding of mathematics in everyday life. For example, in an exercise class for older learners, tutors use number games that relate to the benefits of exercise. Learners on accredited mathematics programmes receive good teaching that results in a high proportion achieving their qualifications.

- Tutors regularly set and mark work that extends learners' subject knowledge. Learners' folders are well presented and demonstrate their progress over time.
- Classrooms in the main centres are productive learning environments. Tutors enhance learning by using a wide range of resources; computers are widely available and allow learners to study outside timetabled classes or research employment opportunities. Learners in interior design have access to a variety of design materials and constructions that bring the subject to life.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Attendance is good for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities but low on some community learning programmes, ESOL, English and mathematics. Managers monitor attendance, but do not analyse it sufficiently well to identify variations between locations and tutor. Trend data is not yet available to indicate if attendance is improving or declining. Tutors do not always check why learners are late and do not agree strategies to help learners improve their punctuality.
- Feedback from several learners indicates that many residents are not always aware of their local learning centres and what they offer. BAEC's website provides good information about the courses at the two main learning centres, but there is insufficient information about community-based learning courses or links to other relevant information.
- BAEC and one of the community centres offer a weekly work club in areas where most job seekers live. Participants have good access to computers, a support tutor and volunteers for job search activities. Many of the participants attending regularly have been unemployed for a long time and completed all the free courses available to them. There are few opportunities for adults to further develop and improve their skills, and many make slow progress in gaining employment.
- Adult learning programmes are well designed to improve learners' employability skills, particularly English and mathematics as well as personal skills. Courses for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities focus well on independent living skills, promoting healthy lifestyles as well as preparing learners for voluntary or part-time work. Community courses include positive thinking and mindful meditation as well as introductory courses to encourage residents to learn new skills.
- The vast majority of learners thoroughly enjoy their courses and really appreciate the helpful and friendly staff at the learning centres and community venues. Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities speak confidently about how the courses improve their self-confidence and how much they enjoy learning new skills and making friends. All venues provide a welcoming, safe learning environment, although not all are easy to find.
- Learners applying for ESOL, English, mathematics and counselling courses are carefully assessed to ensure that they are enrolled on the most appropriate courses. Where necessary, staff provide learners with relevant information, advice and guidance about other courses that may be more suitable.
- Tutors on community outreach programmes successfully explain next steps to learners that often lead to formal qualifications or relevant work. For example, parents in family learning are shown how they can train to be classroom assistants. Learners on introductory counselling programmes are advised on how to become an accredited counsellor.

- Learners develop effective social and interpersonal skills that support their studies well and improve their well-being. Learners build lasting friendships with their peers and benefit from the support this gives them. For example, adult carers share their difficulties openly and feel better equipped to cope with their personal circumstances.
- Staff make good use of additional activities to enhance several of the programmes. Learners on the interior design courses attend a trade show, while learners on ESOL courses are offered a free guided walk along the Thames to learn about the history of London, thus developing their speaking and listening skills.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- In 2015/16, the proportion of learners staying to the end of their programme remained high, but the proportion who achieved their qualification declined. A third of enrolments were on courses where achievement was below the minimum standards expected. Most of these were reading and writing ESOL courses, level 2 functional skills in English and mathematics, and several information technology courses.
- During the last three years, male learners have performed slightly better than female learners. However in 2015/16 the gap between male and female learners increased significantly due to the high proportion of female learners on low-performing ESOL courses. Gaps also exist in the achievement of different minority ethnic groups, the causes of which have not been evaluated by managers.
- The vast majority of learners complete their community-based non-accredited courses. A small but increasing number of learners from community learning courses progress to other courses at the main learning centres. There are several examples of learners gaining employment and voluntary work. However, managers do not routinely monitor learners' progression to establish what proportion of learners gain positive outcomes.
- Learners on community-based courses and vocational programmes make good progress during their classes. A significant minority of learners on ESOL courses and those attending the work club make slower than expected progress.
- On a small but significant number of vocational courses the vast majority of learners are successfully achieving their qualifications. This is particularly so in level 2 certificates in interior design and in computerised accounting for business, level 1 award in information technology user as well as entry-level non-regulated activities in performing arts, crafts, creative arts and design.
- Pass rates for the small number of learners on GCSE English and mathematics are good, and the majority achieve A* to C grades.

Provider details

Unique reference number	53108
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4,950
Principal/CEO	Carol Arnfield
Telephone number	020 8659 7976
Website	www.baec.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 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	7	2127	5	182	-	3	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of the Poverest Centre, 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; 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.

Inspection team

Joy Montgomery, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Martin	Her Majesty's Inspector
Darrell Bate	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Lambert	Her Majesty's Inspector
Haifa Abdul Amir	Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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