

# Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Local authority – Sandwell Adult and Family Learning

## Inspection dates

16–19 January 2018

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Senior leaders and governors have a clear strategic vision and provide good educational opportunities for the most disadvantaged learners in the local communities.
- Leaders work well with local partners to broaden the range of courses. This widens their appeal and enables more learners to progress in their personal and working lives.
- Staff place the welfare of learners at the heart of their work. Strong support enables a high proportion of learners to stay on course and achieve their aims.
- The large majority of learners achieve their aims on community learning, employability and functional skills courses. Learners' outcomes and attendance on functional skills courses in English are very strong.
- The large majority of teachers adapt learning activities to meet the needs of learners of different abilities and competence in English. As a result, the very large majority of learners progress well.
- Learners work very well together and treat each other with respect. They develop their confidence, which helps them to try new approaches to learning. In turn, they improve their personal and social skills.
- In a minority of learning activities, teachers do not meet the individual needs of some learners. In these sessions, the work is too hard for some learners and too easy for others. As a result, these learners do not progress well enough.
- Leaders do not have easy access to information about the attendance, retention and progress of current learners. As a result, managers are slow to identify some underperformance by groups of learners.
- Outcomes for learners on mathematics functional skills level 1 require further improvement to be good.
- A minority of learners, particularly on short courses, have only a narrow and basic understanding of extremism and radicalisation.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- The Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council area is in the West Midlands. It has a population of about 322,000 and is ethnically diverse. Over a third of the population are from minority ethnic groups. Unemployment is high and above the regional and national rate. Many people are in low-skilled and low-paid jobs. A high proportion of the population have no qualifications, and only a small percentage have higher-level qualifications.
- Sandwell Adult and Family Learning (SAFL) specialises in adult learning programmes. They offer courses in vocational learning, preparation for employment, and community learning. Vocational learning includes the development of English, mathematics, and information technology skills. The large majority of learners are on courses, which do not lead to a formal qualification (non-accredited learning). Learning takes place in three main adult learning centres and in a range of community venues, including schools, libraries and children's centres.

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

- Improve the minority of teaching and learning which are not yet good by:
  - ensuring that all teachers adapt their learning activities to meet the needs of learners; in particular those with learning difficulties and disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language, and the most able learners
  - identifying existing good practice, and sharing this knowledge, skill and understanding with teachers so that there is improved consistency, and more learners progress well.
- Improve the management information systems, so that managers receive timely information about the attendance, retention and progress of current learners to enable them to take prompt action to identify and rectify underperformance by groups of learners.
- Further improve the outcomes of learners on mathematics functional skills level 1 courses by continuing the current management strategy of recruiting, training and closely managing the performance of teaching staff in this area.
- Broaden and extend learners' understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism by:
  - improving the confidence and knowledge of teachers so that they are able to discuss with learners the different aspects of radicalisation and extremism
  - ensuring that learners have more opportunities to express their understanding of the different forms of extremism as it affects their local community.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, managers and governors have successfully ensured that the quality of the provision has improved since the previous inspection. A clear strategy and vision, informed by a deep and thorough analysis of the needs of residents in the locality, has ensured that the range of provision matches the needs of learners very well.
- Leaders use local economic information and their own knowledge of the personal needs of the diverse community to establish courses that appeal to learners. They have developed a range of courses at each centre, which includes courses in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), preparation for employment, and community learning. For example, at the centre in Smethwick, managers have developed a new speaking and listening course to improve the communication between learners and their doctors, and with their children's teachers. Although numbers of male learners have increased, they form a minority of the current learners. Leaders still need to strengthen their current strategy for attracting male learners. The proportion of unemployed males in the community matches that for females and therefore it is a priority to encourage these learners to enrol to develop their skills for employment.
- Since the previous inspection, governors have reorganised the management team. The head of service, in conjunction with the newly appointed adult and community learning manager, has increased the focus on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have undertaken a wide range of improvement actions, which have resulted in good teaching, learning and assessment. Managers have correctly identified that additional action is required to secure further consistency in the quality of provision, for example by identifying and sharing teachers' good practice in teaching, learning and assessment on the courses without formal qualifications.
- Leaders and managers have built very successful and flexible partnerships with other educational establishments in the community. This has increased the participation levels of adults who may not feel comfortable in the established centres, and of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, leaders at a local school make positive and successful efforts to enrol parents on the first aid courses, which teachers deliver at the school. In another case, leaders have worked effectively with organisations supporting adults with learning disabilities to design courses to meet the interests of their learners. Often, these collaborations secure the delivery of courses to groups that otherwise may not be able to participate in learning.
- Leaders manage subcontractors well, ensuring good provision. These working arrangements have enabled community partners to provide learners in the locality with highly relevant learning opportunities that help build their confidence and improve their self-esteem. Since the previous inspection, leaders have reduced the number of subcontracted providers and improved the management arrangements. Managers provide appropriate levels of support and challenge to subcontractors. Managers observe teaching and learning in the subcontractor and follow up actions for improvement. As a result, one previously underperforming subcontractor is now providing learners with a good-quality learning experience.
- Managers ensure that learners receive independent advice and guidance about their next

steps. As a result of effective partnership working, the National Careers Service, Connexions and Jobcentre Plus staff join with the provider's own staff to support learners' successful progression into their next stage of learning, or into employment.

- Leaders have now established a culture of critical self-assessment to assist with the improvement of the provision and provide a clear focus on improving the quality of learners' experience. Managers use course performance data and the feedback given to teachers on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment effectively to inform the self-assessment process. Managers carefully plan and match staff training well to ensure that it links directly with the areas for improvement identified during the observation of teachers in lessons. For example, teachers' confidence and competency in promoting British values in lessons have improved since the previous inspection. Managers recognise that further action is required to ensure that all learners can really understand the relevance of these issues to their daily lives.
- Leaders and managers establish clear and appropriate expectations in terms of learners' behaviour. Managers present these values and expectations in the learner handbook and through the induction programme. Leaders and managers act swiftly and appropriately in the rare event of inappropriate behaviour. As a result, there is a harmonious, purposeful and respectful atmosphere on all sites.
- Leaders and managers place the welfare of learners at the heart of their work. Leaders and managers consider the needs of learners when deciding the nature, timing and location of courses. Initial assessment leads to effective individual support in the classroom, and staff, resources and local partners are available to support learners with more personal issues, such as the management of finances. Comprehensive support enables a high proportion of learners to stay on course and achieve their aims.
- Leaders and managers prioritise appropriately the development of English and mathematics skills, through a wide range of courses. Learners develop their skills well in these qualifications. However, managers do not ensure that learners continue to develop these skills consistently in all types of course. Managers do not ensure teachers identify and support the language needs of learners in all courses.
- Leaders have improved the collection and analysis of management information. They use it well to improve course planning, and to inform their judgements on quality and the priorities for improvement. For example, leaders now use learners' destination data well in the evaluation of courses. Although managers do respond promptly to individual cases of poor attendance or progress, they do not receive an early picture of the group performance. The collection of data requires further improvement. Leaders do not have easy access to information about the attendance, retention and progress of current learners. For example, leaders previously identified the need to improve the performance of white British male learners on functional skills courses. Leaders have not yet systematically reviewed the in-year progress on this issue.

### **The governance of the provider**

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have established a formal governing body. The board of governors has developed a clear vision and purpose for SAFL. They are successful in offering educational opportunities to the most disadvantaged learners in deprived communities and raising aspirations.

- The board meets regularly to monitor the progress made by managers in improving the quality and range of the courses. Managers now produce more informative reports to governors. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and the needs of adult learners in the Sandwell community.
- Governors are well informed and provide effective challenge and support. They ensure that staff maintain their focus on improving the quality of the service and on the key priorities for residents in the local area.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers meet their statutory requirements for safeguarding. Leaders have developed and implemented comprehensive policies and procedures, which ensure that all learners remain safe. Managers follow the procedures for the safe recruitment of staff, and ensure that subcontractors adopt the same checks as part of the service level agreement.
- Learners know how to report safeguarding concerns. Managers respond appropriately and promptly to their concerns.
- Leaders have provided staff with effective training regarding the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and the promotion of British values. This is also a key part of the management of the subcontracted provision. Although the large majority of learners are now very familiar with these issues, a minority of learners have a narrow and superficial understanding.
- Leaders and managers have a strong focus on the health, safety and well-being of learners. They assess the risks to learners appropriately and keep detailed confidential records of learner disclosures and safeguarding incidents. Where appropriate, they refer the cases to external agencies. As a result, leaders and managers have developed a positive safeguarding culture.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Teachers have appropriately high expectations of learners and set high standards. The large majority of teachers are highly skilled and provide a variety of learning activities that keep learners of different abilities interested and challenged. This enables them to make good progress from their starting points. For example, on the functional skills mathematics course, learners chose a three-dimensional object from a bag and described it to their peers. This consolidated their understanding of shape, and checked their knowledge of the appropriate technical vocabulary. Learners clearly understood how to use the terms 'face', 'vertices', 'flat', 'curved' and 'spherical'.
- The majority of teachers are knowledgeable, flexible and responsive. They work well with learning support assistants and carers. For instance, on the family first aid course the teacher expertly met the needs of both adults and children by making effective use of the support workers. When working with dyslexic learners, the teachers and support assistants communicated effectively so that they understood their different roles. Working in partnership, they ensured that learners fully participated in lessons, gained

independence and made good progress.

- Within vocational learning sessions, teachers relate theory to practice well. Teachers in business administration provide good contextual examples that help learners to understand how to apply theory to practice. For example, teachers clearly explained how administrators construct reports in business, and how important it is to provide the reference for source documents when quoting views or information. The teacher used real examples, and this improved learners' understanding.
- Managers and teachers provide high-quality advice and guidance on the courses that are available at SAFL and at other local providers. Learners are clear about the reasons for choosing their courses, and the opportunities that are available on successful completion. This increases their levels of motivation.
- Initial assessment on the vast majority of accredited learning courses is thorough, and teachers use this information well to prepare and plan their lessons. The large majority of teachers on non-accredited courses use group discussions and simple practical tasks to identify effectively learners' starting points and support needs. The large majority of learners make the progress of which they are capable.
- Target setting has improved since the last inspection. Teachers set, and agree with learners, clear targets for learning outcomes. They focus on improving learning and achieving qualifications where appropriate. As a result, the large majority of learners improve their skills and achieve their qualifications.
- Teachers provide detailed verbal feedback that learners use in lessons to improve their work. The quality of feedback that teachers provide on marked work, in learning journals and on individual learning plans has improved since the last inspection and for most learners enables them to make improvements. For example, in English, teachers provide particularly useful feedback on what learners should do to improve and what they can do differently to ensure that they do not repeat the same mistakes. However, teachers' feedback on learners' work in mathematics is not always clear enough for learners to know how to improve.
- Teachers assess learners' work regularly and accurately. They give learners opportunities to reflect on their work and the progress that they are making. They use verbal questioning effectively to check learning during sessions, contributing to learners' good progress. They encourage learners to think for themselves, and ensure that learners have time to reflect on their answers before moving on to the next activity. This helps learners to consolidate their learning and build on their understanding well.
- On non-accredited courses, teachers understand and complete thoroughly the provider's procedures for reviewing and maintaining standards. Managers check the paperwork at the end of each term to monitor compliance, identify concerns and agree improvement action plans. As a result, the standards and consistency of assessment have improved.
- In a significant minority of lessons, teachers do not adequately plan for learners' individual needs; for example, the needs of those who have SEN and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language, or who are returning to the course to improve their skills further. On these occasions, teachers provide learning activities that are either too difficult or too easy for these particular learners. Learning resources do not support the learning needs of all learners well enough. Teachers on non-accredited courses do not develop learners' English skills in a planned and coherent way. As a result,

learners in these classes do not make the progress of which they are capable.

- Teachers promote equality and celebrate diversity well through careful planning and by responding to situations as they arise in the classroom. In English, teachers integrate a wide range of diversity and equality topics as the context for learning about grammar and creative writing. For example, in one session the teacher supported the learners well to use persuasive writing techniques while creating a personal political manifesto. This included detailed discussions about equality and justice.
- Teachers integrate themes around British values into lessons very well. As a result, most learners can discuss the meaning of the terms, 'democracy' and 'the rule of law' and the importance of respect for different views. The majority of learners can apply their understanding to their everyday lives and studies. For example, in functional skills ICT, learners identified the importance of considering copyright law when downloading and using images. In functional skills English, the teacher included British values terminology in the learners' vocabulary spelling lists and explored their meaning well.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

- Learners enjoy their learning. Most learners are well motivated and have positive attitudes to learning. Learners respond quickly to instructions and requests from staff, allowing learners to make swifter progress. Learners show pride in their work. This is evident in the way they record their learning and reflect on what they have done well. Learners are eager to talk about what they have learned. Learners enjoy the annual awards evening, where managers and teachers present them with awards and display their work. Learners are keen to give feedback on the quality of the courses. Their feedback is very positive but it also includes well-considered suggestions for improvement. For example, learners have requested new drop-in study spaces with computers. These have now been set up in the Tipton centre.
- The large majority of learners improve their academic skills and their personal effectiveness well. Most learners work well both independently and collaboratively, supporting their good progress. Where learners are less confident, they develop the ability to work effectively in groups over time. Many learners develop their confidence after returning to study after a period away from education and training. Learners report that their confidence improves with improvements in their literacy skills. Most learners develop well the skills to evaluate their own learning. Learners are able to explain what they need to do to improve. They can show that they have achieved their previous targets for improvement. The standard of learners' work meets the requirements of the course, and in English in particular, the quality of learners' work is very high.
- On accredited courses, such as functional skills English and mathematics, learners complete regular homework on time, and develop the skills to study independently, equipping them well for their next steps. Learners on functional skills English courses identify and use effective ways to improve their written work, particularly their spelling. The majority of learners on English and mathematics courses develop their skills well, but this is not consistently the case on non-accredited provision.
- On courses which are in preparation for employment, learners develop the skills that are necessary for successful online job applications, the development of a curriculum vitae and the successful completion of the driving theory test. As well as the specific subject

content of these courses, learners develop ICT skills and positive ways to present themselves using written language and oral presentation skills. Some learners develop basic personal skills such as maintaining good standards of personal hygiene. Teachers and managers address these issues with tact and respect, but understand how important they are to reduce the barriers to work for some learners. The majority of learners progress to employment after these courses.

- Learners state that they feel safe. They know how to report any safeguarding concerns. 'Healthy champions' promote healthy lifestyles effectively to groups of learners through the year. Managers have developed a life-skills course, which provides learners with SEN and/or disabilities with the opportunity to exercise safely and learn about first aid and nutrition. Learners' feedback is positive.
- The very large majority of learners attend well and are punctual. Attendance on community learning programmes is very high. Learners' attendance on functional skills English courses is very good. However, although attendance is improving, attendance on functional skills mathematics courses requires improvement.
- The large majority of learners are able to explain British values and to discuss ways of keeping themselves safe from extremism and radicalisation. Teachers have placed displays in classrooms and they refer to the topics in lessons. However, a significant minority of learners, particularly on short courses, do not have a detailed or broad enough understanding. They are not able to discuss the different forms of extremism as they affect the local communities.
- The large majority of learners develop a good range of personal and employability skills, which they review regularly to evaluate progress. For example, in a sewing class learners develop their mathematical skills by taking measurements. However, teachers do not plan, record and track the development of these skills in their individual learning plans. As a result, learners do not develop these skills, particularly in non-accredited provision, in a systematic manner. This means that a minority of learners do not develop the skills they need to progress swiftly.

## Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- Most learners enrol on non-accredited courses. The large majority of learners achieve their aims on these courses. This includes the outcomes for learners who study with subcontractors; these were very high in 2016/17.
- A large number of learners study entry-level qualifications. The large majority of outcomes relate to employability qualifications in 2016/17. The very large majority of learners were successful and more than half the learners progressed to employment. Most of these learners were mandated to attend by Jobcentre Plus.
- A minority of learners study accredited courses, which include functional skills English, mathematics and ICT. There are relatively few enrolments on ICT functional skills, but achievement rates are high. More learners are on English functional skills courses and achievement is high at entry, level 1 and level 2. Learners achieve well on mathematics functional skills at entry level and level 2. Although outcomes have improved rapidly at level 1, they require further improvement. A high proportion of learners on English functional skills progress to a higher level in the subsequent year.

- The majority of current learners are making positive progress from their starting points and developing the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding. Retention and achievement rates for learners on courses where learners have already completed in the current year are very high.
- Leaders and managers have closed the achievement gap between white British learners and black and minority ethnic learners.
- While the majority of learners achieve their functional skills qualifications, there is a performance gap at level 1 for learners with SEN and/or disabilities. This occurred only in 2017; managers are aware of the need to monitor this closely and take actions to close the gap in 2018.
- Leaders and managers have improved their systems for tracking learners' destinations for preparation for employment courses and accredited learning. Learners make good progress to employment from these courses.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	54267
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,491
Director	Mr Christopher Ward
Telephone number	0121 569 8363
Website	<a href="http://www.sandwell.gov.uk">www.sandwell.gov.uk</a>

## 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+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	–	691	–	89	–	–	–	–
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 whom the provider receives high-needs funding	–							
Funding received from:	Education and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Learn Skills Today, Pilot IMS, Euro Shaft							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the adult community learning manager, 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.

## Inspection team

Martin Ward, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Denise Olander	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maria Navarro	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sylvia Farrier	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Smith	Senior Her Majesty's Inspector

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