

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Inspection report

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Name of lead inspector: Bob Busby HMI

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Type of provider: Local authority
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
The Council House

Address: Priory Road
Dudley
DY1 1HF

Telephone number: 01384 818181

Information about the provider

1. Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC) is one of four metropolitan boroughs in the Black Country region of the West Midlands. It is located on the western part of the West Midlands conurbation and forms the south-west corner of the Black Country. The borough occupies an area of 38 square miles, with four town centres and has approximately 25% green space. It has a population of 306,000 residents and 10,000 businesses.
2. The Adult and Community Learning Team within the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services manages the adult and community learning (ACL) provision. The service offers vocational and recreational courses across 11 subject areas in 83 locations. The ACL team offers a subsidised programme of courses with approximately two-thirds of the funding coming from the Skills Funding agency. Courses are held in community settings such as Neighbourhood Learning Centres, schools and libraries. They are delivered by the ACL team, by partners in schools under service level agreements and by the voluntary sector under subcontract arrangements. Currently, 3,527 learners access courses provided by DMBC. Since the last inspection DMBC has ceased to offer work-based learning.
3. The unemployment rate in Dudley between July 2010 and June 2011 was 10.6% which is higher than the national rate of 7.7%. The proportion of the population aged 16 to 64 who hold no qualifications is 15.4%, much higher than the national rate of 11.3%.
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of DMBC:
 - St Thomas' Community Network (literacy, numeracy, ESOL, information technology and family learning)
 - Heantun Housing (targeted work for adult learners from priority groups)
 - The Dormston Centre (healthcare, geneology, sign language, languages, floristry, flower arranging, information technology, beauty therapy, catering, sport and fitness, dance, music, crafts and fine arts)
 - Learning 4 Life (arts, crafts, fitness, beauty, information technology and family learning)
 - Thorns Community College (music, dance, creative crafts and languages)

Type of provision	Number of learners in 2010/11
Provision for adult learners: Learning for social and personal development	6,644 part time learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Learning for social and personal development	Grade
Sport, leisure and recreation	2
Crafts, creative arts and design	2
Foundations for learning and life	2
Family learning	2

Overall effectiveness

- DMBC is a good provider of adult and community learning. Learners make very good progress and attain significant improvement in their levels of self confidence. The proportion of learners who successfully achieve their goals has increased since the last inspection and is now high. On non-accredited courses, most learners complete their courses. Tutors are skilful at agreeing and setting specific learning goals. They accurately record learners' progress. Many learners go on to make excellent contributions to their communities through paid or voluntary work or the setting up of community clubs. Learners develop a good awareness of the advantages of adopting healthy lifestyles.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Most lessons are well planned, effectively paced and include highly individualised, personal support. Classrooms are well equipped with good access to information and learning technology (ILT) resources but these are not always used well to enliven lessons. Learners enjoy classes and value their improved skills. DMBC works

very effectively with partners to provide a good range of provision at convenient venues and times across the borough.

7. DMBC manages its provision well. It has robust arrangements for ensuring that learners are safe and is particularly effective at improving learners' understanding of internet safety. The service's policy on equality and diversity is effective. However, the promotion of equality and diversity within lessons is not yet consistently embedded across all subjects. The quality of accommodation and specialist resources to support teaching and learning are good. DMBC closely monitors differences in the achievement by particular groups and has taken effective steps to close gaps.
8. DMBC focuses well on improvement. The observation of teaching and learning process is well established and effective, supported by a staff mentorship scheme which is valued by all tutors. Learners' views are used well to develop and improve the provision. The self-assessment process is inclusive and accurate.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners quickly develop good skills and gain confidence and self-esteem which have a very positive impact on their lives. Learners display good levels of practical skills and make good progress in class relative to their starting points. Attendance at sessions is good. In family learning parents learn to engage better with their children and to manage their behaviour more effectively.
- The proportions of learners who are retained on courses and who achieve their learning goals have improved and are now high across all subject areas. The arrangements for the recognition and recording of progress and achievement (RARPA) are reliable but their effectiveness varies across the service. Overall, across the service there is no significant achievement gap between different groups. However, the service is aware of differences in the achievement of some learner groups within subject areas.
- Many learners go on to make significant contributions to their community. Many have established community development groups or activity groups to benefit local communities. The service works well with other community organisations to encourage learners and volunteers to engage in community activities. In most subject areas learners develop a good awareness of the advantages of adopting healthy lifestyles.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons are well planned, highly individualised and effectively paced. Tutors employ a good variety of teaching strategies to engage all learners. Learners particularly value how tutors assist in their development of vocational and employability skills. Tutors do not always make use of available technologies to enliven and reinforce teaching and learning.
- The provision meets the needs of learners well. DMBC works well with educational partners and voluntary organisations across the borough to ensure

that a good range of progression routes are available. Progression opportunities are well signposted within the service. A significant number of courses are developed and offered to encourage and help learners who are at the risk of social exclusion. DMBC offers too few accredited courses within its centres.

- The service has developed exceptionally strong partnerships to benefit learners. DMBC and its partners use very good communication and joint planning to develop and offer provision at convenient venues and times across the borough. DMBC works extremely well with other learning providers, community organisations and support agencies to offer a well-coordinated, comprehensive service particularly in the areas of greatest need.
- DMBC and its partners have highly effective support systems to help learners overcome barriers to learning and successfully complete their courses. Individual support from tutors is particularly good. Within teaching sessions there is effective support provided by volunteers but it is not always well planned. Information, advice and guidance is well structured. Progression opportunities are well advertised but information on courses starting later in the year is less freely available.
- Excellent strategic management and leadership ensures that the ACL provision very effectively contributes towards the achievement of the council's strategic priorities, improving the quality of life for Dudley residents. Comprehensive data are available to support management although performance reports can often be overly detailed. Staff benefit from very good professional development opportunities.
- Good governance is effective in monitoring the provision's effectiveness in meeting its key performance targets. However, while performance monitoring is strongly focused on the engagement of learners it has only a satisfactory focus on the achievement and outcomes of learners.
- The provision has a very strong ethos of promoting equality and diversity through engaging with the most deprived and hard-to-reach residents. Developments in equality and diversity are led by a very effective group. Staff benefit from good training. Analysis of data on the performance of different groups shows no significant variations overall. The promotion of equality and diversity within lessons is not consistently embedded in all subjects.
- Quality improvement arrangements, including self assessment, are good. Staff are fully involved in the self assessment process which has been effective in improving the quality of provision. A wide range of methods to consult with and gain feedback from learners are effective in improving the quality of learners' experiences.
- The service has highly effective arrangements to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Lesson observations lead to effective action plans which are monitored well. A well-structured mentorship programme provides good support to develop and improve tutors' skills in specialist aspects of provision and is valued by tutors. The proportion of good or better teaching across the service has increased significantly and is now high.

What does DMBC need to do to improve further?

- Increase the availability of, and develop tutors' skills in the use of, information and learning technology, including the virtual learning environment, to enhance the quality of learning.
- Make better use of the wide range of available data to include more focused reporting on learners' outcomes and progression to support managers in decision making and enhance the corporate board and elected members' ability to provide full support and challenge.
- Work closely with partners to provide learners with broader access to accredited qualifications within centres to encourage more learners to achieve qualifications and enhance their job prospects.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the excellent teachers who are inspiring and make learning fun
- being taught to think for themselves
- learning new skills and gaining in confidence
- being able to access good individual support from tutors at any time
- the opportunity to get out of the house, meet people and learn new things
- gaining a qualification, and a certificate, for the first time
- the help to progress in their job, or as a volunteer
- new experiences such as residential.

What learners would like to see improved:

- to be able to enrol online
- more easily accessible information on what courses are being offered and where
- fewer cancellations of advertised classes
- better access to accredited qualifications within the centres
- the burdensome paperwork.

Summary of the views of stakeholders/partners as confirmed by inspectors

What stakeholders/partners like:

- the good partnership working that enables learners to attend training in local centres
- the collaborative work to promote health and cultural issues
- the swift response, professionalism and efficiency of all staff

- the service's enthusiastic response to suggestions and their willingness to explore new markets
- the very good communication
- the positive impact the service has had on families
- the range of courses on offer.

What stakeholders/partners would like to see improved:

- the burdensome paperwork.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

9. DMBC has good capacity to improve. It has responded well to government initiatives and to the previous inspection's findings. All aspects of provision have improved ensuring good outcomes for learners, good quality of provision and good leadership and management. Learners make significant progress in improving their confidence and in developing useful skills. Excellent partnership working significantly benefits learners by providing a good range of learning opportunities at convenient times and locations. The recruitment of learners from minority ethnic groups has improved and overall, there are no significant variations in performance between different groups. Arrangements for promotion of equality and diversity are good but more needs to be done to embed equality and diversity within the curriculum.
10. The self-assessment process is effective and inclusive, identifying accurately most strengths and areas for improvements identified during the inspection. Use of learners' feedback is good. Community consultation is particularly strong and is used well to identify improvement actions. DMBC monitors closely the progress against the actions for improvement. Observations of teaching and learning have led to significant improvements in quality with over 80% of lessons judged good or outstanding in 2010/11. Provision in leisure, sport and recreation has improved from inadequate in 2007 to good at this inspection.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

11. Outcomes for learners are good. Learners develop good skills and gain in confidence and self-esteem. Learners make very good progress in class relative to their starting points. Attendance at sessions is good. Data provided by DMBC on learning outcomes indicate that overall success rates across all courses increased to 93% so far in 2011/12 and are now high.
12. The proportion of learners who complete their courses has risen since the last inspection and is now high although there is some variation across subject areas. The arrangements for the recognition and recording of progress and achievement (RARPA) are robust and reliable. Tutors set realistic, challenging learning goals and monitor learners' progress well. There is no significant achievement gap between different groups across the service although variations exist within subject areas.
13. Learners feel safe attending sessions. Most learners have a good awareness of how to protect themselves and understand and appreciate the arrangements in place to keep them safe. Safe working practices are prioritised. The service provides particularly good guidance on safe use of the internet.

14. The service works exceptionally well with community organisations to encourage learners and volunteers to engage in activities to benefit their communities. Many Learners go on to make significant contributions to their community through establishing activity groups. DMBC has developed and supported many projects that positively contribute to community cohesion and has encouraged many learners to work as volunteers, thereby promoting learning in the most deprived areas.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

15. Teaching and learning are good. Learners benefit from good teaching and many progress from low starting points to achieve good outcomes. Tutors employ a variety of teaching strategies to engage all learners and know their learners well. Lesson plans include detailed notes on each learner. Individual learning plans are completed well and realistic challenging targets agreed with individuals. Targets are mostly well focused on learning but their effectiveness varies between tutors. Good individual support is offered in teaching sessions to overcome barriers to learning and ensure all learners make good progress. Tutors do not always make use of available technologies to enliven and reinforce learning. Use of the virtual learning environment is insufficiently developed. The promotion of equality and diversity is not well embedded in all lessons.
16. The service has developed highly effective arrangements to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Lesson observations lead to effective action plans which are well monitored by managers. Tutors are provided with good support for skills improvement through a well structured and highly effective mentorship programme. The proportion of good or better teaching across the service has increased significantly and is now high.
17. The provision meets the needs of learners well. DMBC works extremely well with educational partners and voluntary organisations across the borough to ensure that a good range of progression routes are available to learners. Joint planning of provision is very effective in providing a significant number of courses to encourage and help learners who are at risk of social exclusion and to improve their aspirations. The service has modified some of its courses to improve the recruitment and achievement of some groups of learners. Progression opportunities are well signposted within the service. However, DMBC offers too few accredited courses within its centres.
18. Partnership working is excellent. Partnerships provide a very well co-ordinated approach to engage with local communities and develop provision. The council led Post 19 Learning and Skills partnership is particularly effective in bringing sectors together to implement a cross borough approach to targeting priority and hard to engage groups. Good use is made of these partnerships to very effectively provide learning opportunities within the heart of local communities. In 2010/11 all key targets for the engagement of priority groups were exceeded. Strong links with Jobcentre Plus and the provision of job clubs have

been very effective in helping unemployed residents of the borough back into employment. Partnerships with schools' extended services, children's centres and Children's Services have enabled very effective engagement of some of the most vulnerable families.

19. Care guidance and support for learners are good. The service and its partners have developed a good range of support structures to help learners successfully complete their courses. Tutors are very sensitive to learners' support and health issues. They provide good support within classes to help learners overcome a range of barriers to learning. Within teaching sessions there is effective peer and volunteer support to complement the specialist support, but this is not always well planned. Information advice and guidance is effective. Progression routes are advertised well but information on courses starting later in the year is less freely available.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

20. Strategic management and leadership are excellent. The council recognises the key role of adult and community learning in contributing to the achievement of its strategic plan targets and improving the quality of life for Dudley residents. The head of service has good support from the council senior managers. DMBC staff have a very good understanding of their contribution to council targets and are enthusiastic, motivated and strongly committed to their achievement. The provision of management data, found insufficient at the previous reinspection, is now extensive although some reports are too detailed to be used effectively by all staff. Communications are particularly strong and systems for performance managing and developing staff are very effective. Commissioning and subcontract management arrangements are thorough.
21. Governance and accountability arrangements are good. Elected members and corporate officers frequently monitor and challenge DMBC ensuring that it is meeting its key performance indicators. Elected members have good oversight of the self-assessment report. However, while performance monitoring has a very strong focus on engaging learners from priority groups the reporting of the achievement and outcomes of those learners is less detailed.
22. The service has robust arrangements to safeguard learners. Staff and learners have a good awareness of safeguarding. All staff have been suitably trained and managers have received further training on safer recruitment. All staff who engage with learners have undergone enhanced criminal records bureau (CRB) checks. A suitable central record is maintained but does not include all training. CRB checks and training are refreshed every three years. A high priority is placed on ensuring learners understand internet safety.
23. The promotion of equality and diversity is central to the ethos and culture of the service. Developments are very effectively led by an equality and diversity group comprising staff from across the service. The group carries out impact assessments of all new policies and is currently extending this to existing

policies. Data are effectively analysed to identify any differences in the performance of different groups and identify actions to address the few small variations identified. Staff receive good training to develop their understanding of equality and diversity and how to meet the differing needs of their learners. Much provision is delivered through a wide range of venues in the heart of local communities. Whilst there are some very good examples of the promotion of equality and diversity during lessons the service recognises that this is an area for improvement.

24. Learners' views are used well to inform improvements such as the purchase of specialist resources and improved computing facilities. Community consultation is used particularly well to develop new provision. It has resulted in good engagement of under-represented groups and hard-to-reach learners through careful identification of the best venues.
25. Initiatives to improve the quality of provision are good. At the previous reinspection the recording of observations of teaching and learning were under developed. The process has been significantly improved and is now good. Strategies to improve the quality of provision in the sport, leisure and recreation subject area have resulted in significant improvements from a position of inadequacy in the 2007 inspection to now being judged good. The self-assessment process is inclusive. The service has benefited from being an active member of a peer review and development group drawn from local authorities in the West Midlands. However, some aspects of the quality system need to be more formal to ensure consistency of effective practice.
26. The service provides good value for money. Many learners progress from a very low starting point to achieve good outcomes. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The excellent partnerships enable very efficient use of accommodation. Teaching resources are mostly good. The service is committed to providing sustainable resources.

Subject areas

Learning for social and personal development

Other social and personal development learning provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: *health, public service and care; agriculture, horticulture and animal care; information and communications technology; retail and commercial enterprise; leisure, travel and tourism; arts, media and publishing; history, philosophy and theology; language, literature and culture; education and training.*

Sport, leisure and recreation

Grade 2

Context

27. Dudley MBC offers mostly part time non accredited courses in sport and fitness at 9 venues across Dudley. Classes include yoga, pilates; keep fit, swimming, aerobics and sports leadership. Currently there are 230 learners, of whom 87% are female. Learners from a minority ethnic background account for 8% of the total learners. Course sessions generally last for 1 hour and for 10-12 weeks. Five tutors deliver courses supported by a tutor mentor and curriculum leader.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. All learners enjoy their classes and the significant majority complete the course. Learners display good levels of practical skills and make good progress in class relative to their starting points. Overall, attendance is good; however, attendance in observed sessions was satisfactory.
- Learners make good progress achieving challenging personal targets. They enjoy many physical benefits in the learning sessions, including improvements in cardiovascular and muscular fitness, flexibility and general health and well-being. Learners also experience relief from specific health conditions. On completion of courses many learners progress to recreational sessions to maintain their health and fitness levels and sustain their healthy lifestyles.
- Learners feel safe. Tutors complete health screening for learners and use it effectively to plan lessons. However, in a small minority of cases screening records are not always fully complete. Lessons are adapted to take account of learners' medical conditions enabling them to participate effectively and safely. Tutors give a high priority to health and safety; all tutors teaching sport and fitness have achieved the local authority safeguarding standard.
- Learners develop a good understanding of the issues relating to health and well-being. Tutors regularly promote the benefits of exercise in learning and actively promote further learning. Learners aged over 50 particularly value the positive impact of classes on their health and well-being, helping them to stay fit and active in the community.

- Teaching and learning are good. Learners show high levels of enthusiasm in sessions that are well-planned, fast paced and sufficiently challenge each individual. Tutors are highly skilled in differentiating activities, offering clear instructions and providing demonstrations that help learners' correct poor performance. However, they do not always use effective assessment methods and tools, including ILT, to inform learners of their overall progress.
- The provision effectively meets the needs and interests of learners. A broad range of activities take place in a variety of locations during weekdays and evenings, enabling easy access for learners. Courses are planned to provide progression to further ACL provision, recreation courses and accredited provision with partners. The recruitment of men onto courses has recently increased, although it remains significantly below that of women.
- Partnerships are good. The service works closely with a wide range of partners to secure additional premises across the region to extend its curriculum. These links have resulted in new provision and progression opportunities increasing learner engagement. These include "healthy hubs" in partnership with the local primary care trust. Other partnerships include local schools, local health trainers, community groups and mental health services.
- Care guidance and support for learners is good. Community support and outreach workers very effectively support tutors, and provide learners with detailed information, guidance and advice on courses. Tutors make good use of initial assessment results to plan learning activities which take into account learners' abilities.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Provision has been successfully developed by community support coordinators and partners to attract learners from particular under-represented groups, such as Asian women. Tutors actively support all learners and adapt session activities to enable effective and worthwhile participation by all. However, the active promotion of cultural and historical heritage is underdeveloped.
- Curriculum management, including support and training for tutors, is particularly effective. Individual tutor support and development has had a significant impact in raising the quality of teaching and learning. Managers provide regular opportunities for tutor mentors to meet and share best practice and support observers with technical specialists where necessary. However, support in the use of ILT for teaching, learning and assessment is underdeveloped.
- Judgements in the self-assessment report are mainly accurate. Good use is made of quality improvement plans to monitor progress. Tutors feel valued and included in the self-assessment process and receive clear feedback on actions for improvement and sharing of best practice. However quality improvement plan targets are not always sufficiently detailed and specific to enable effective progress monitoring.

What does DMBC need to do to improve further?

- Raise the standards of learning and assessment by increasing the variety of assessment methods, including the availability and use of ILT, to support learners' understanding of their progress.
- Further develop curriculum and recruitment plans to widen consultation and identify opportunities to increase participation by male learners.
- Improve the promotion of cultural and historical heritage by developing case studies, activities and learning resources using examples from the diverse sports, recreation and leisure activities that take place in the community.

Crafts, creative arts and design

Grade 2

Context

28. Dudley MBC offers a range of part time non accredited art and craft courses which run during the day and evening. These include classes in pastel, art, photography, woodwork, jewellery and Black Country crafts. Currently there are 663 learners, of whom 85% are female. Learners from a minority ethnic background account for 13% of total learners. There are 19 tutors who all work part time, delivering courses in eleven venues throughout the borough. The subject area is managed by a community learning manager and a curriculum leader.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners are fully engaged, highly motivated and participate well in class. Many learners really enjoy their learning, often for the first time. They gain good skills and techniques quickly. They use sketchbooks well to reflect and improve their techniques, and produce a high standard of work. For example, one woodwork learner made a pair of gates for his drive which were of professional standard.
- Learners develop good personal and social skills. They enjoy their lessons and feel safe. Attendance is good. Learners come together to work on well-planned cross-curricular projects, such as a project on the Titanic. Learners make positive contributions to the community with events such as Arts Factor, which involved 100 pieces of artwork exhibited and 80 learners performing to an audience of 350 local residents.
- Teaching and learning are good. Learners value the support that teachers give them. Teachers are made aware if a learner declares a difficulty or disability and act on the information discreetly. Teaching staff have developed excellent productive relationships with learners. In the best lessons teachers plan and teach challenging activities that enable learners to progress quickly. They use questioning well to check learners' understanding and progress.
- Most teachers provide good resources to inspire their learners, for instance face painting classes use professional quality paints to practice with. However, most tutors do not use ILT effectively to enhance learning, and there are missed opportunities to show research and presentations. The minority of less effective lessons are dominated by the teacher and do not always provide a sufficiently wide range of activities to invigorate and inspire learners.
- Good assessment with detailed written feedback in individual learning diaries encourages learners to develop their skills. Learners have clearly defined goals and understand what they have to do to achieve them. Teachers have a good knowledge of the system of recognising and recording progress and achievement, and use it well to show progress. The virtual learning environment is insufficiently developed.

- The provision is very responsive to the needs and interests of learners, whose opinions are sought regularly and acted upon. A good range of courses is delivered from eleven centres including libraries, schools and community centres which are in the heart of communities. Non-traditional learners are targeted with strategies such as having exhibitions and classes in shops in town centres. However, there are insufficient opportunities to progress to higher level courses.
- Very good partnerships have been developed with community and voluntary organisations which have promoted social inclusion. For instance, partnership work with a local Primary Care Trust resulted in the development of materials to raise awareness of health issues with British minority ethnic learners. Partnerships with museums have enabled learners to book exhibition space for their artwork. Other partners successfully promote involvement in the arts widely across the borough.
- Support for learners is good, with teachers sensitive to the needs of their learners. Teachers make use of training sessions with the local primary care trust to raise learners' awareness of health issues. Learners speak highly of the support and help they receive from staff. Enrichment activities such as trips to museums and galleries extend learning effectively.
- Curriculum leadership and management are very good. Managers are open, approachable and responsive and have developed a strong positive team ethos. They swiftly and efficiently respond to learners' needs or teachers' requests for new courses. They communicate well with teaching staff, who feel highly supported and valued. Staff have good opportunities for development and training.
- Quality improvement arrangements are good. Internal observation of lessons is effective and has led to improvements in the quality of teaching. Teaching performance is closely monitored and well supported. Teachers appreciate the use of mentoring support if it is needed, following observations. All staff are keen to promote quality improvement. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Social inclusion throughout the curriculum is successful in welcoming and enabling non-traditional learners to participate in learning. Specialist accommodation is good and most general accommodation is satisfactory with good access. Poor signposting at some smaller centres makes them difficult to find.

What does DMBC need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effective use of ILT in teaching and learning through the provision of more training for tutors. Develop the use of the virtual learning environment so that it can be used to its full potential to enhance learning.
- Improve progression opportunities for learners by the development of additional courses, especially for longstanding learners.

Foundations for learning and life

Grade 2

Context

29. Dudley MBC offers a range of part time preparation for life courses which run during the day and evening. Currently, there are 187 learners enrolled on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses and 184 learners on literacy, numeracy and independent living skills courses. Most provision is non-accredited. National tests are offered in literacy and numeracy and qualifications are offered at entry level for literacy, numeracy and ESOL learners.

Key findings

- Pass rates for literacy and numeracy qualifications are high. In 2010/11, pass rates for level 1 literacy and numeracy tests were both 98%. Pass rates for level 2 literacy and level 2 numeracy were also high at 84% and 94% respectively. Initial assessment is not used early enough to plan for qualification achievement sufficiently early in the learning programme.
- Learners make good progress in lessons. ESOL learners demonstrate good speaking and listening skills that they practice in the community. In numeracy classes, learners quickly grasp mathematical formulae in everyday life contexts.
- Learners significantly grow in confidence and motivation while attending courses and are comfortable in trying new activities, speaking up in class without hesitation to provide the answers to tutors' questions. Work is of a high standard and feedback from tutors reinforces learning and confidence in the learners' abilities.
- Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, learning meets individual learners' abilities and interests well. Resources, including ILT, are used effectively. In a minority of lessons, teaching fails to meet the needs of the less able learners and resources are often inappropriate. Recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) is used effectively to plan, review and moderate learners' progress.
- The range of provision meets the needs of learners well. Courses are provided from pre-entry to level 2, and take place during daytime and evenings. A good range of venues provide easy access to learning including community centres, faith, children's and neighbourhood centres.
- Partnership working is outstanding. Outreach workers have developed very effective links with other learning providers to provide easy access to literacy, language and/or numeracy courses for learners attending other subjects. Colleges, conveniently provide learning at DMBC centres.
- Support for learners is satisfactory. Tutors frequently check that learners are not experiencing any difficulties and provide informal advice. Volunteer support workers assist learners in the classroom. However, in some cases this is not

effectively planned. The need to provide training for support workers has been identified but training has not yet taken place.

- Management of the provision is good. Communication and team working are good. Staff work well informally with each other, sharing ideas and resources. Team meetings are very effective and provide a forum for the sharing of best practice. Staff induction is comprehensive. Existing staff received appropriate update training in current policies, procedures and practice. The Skills for Life strategy and action plan is in place but the content is not widely understood by all staff.
- Peer working with other organisations is good and provides an independent view of quality. Staff participated in recent peer review, working as part of a team comprising a range of learning providers to review self-assessment reports and to carry out observations of teaching and learning.
- The virtual learning environment is starting to be used to share resources and practices although this is still under utilised. Inspectors agree with the self-assessment report that the virtual learning environment is not sufficiently well used by staff and learners.
- Quality improvement arrangements are good. Mentoring support effectively assists tutors in improving their practice. Teaching and learning observations are helpful in identifying areas for improvement in tutors' practice. The self-assessment report accurately identifies many of the strengths at inspection.
- Learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity which is developed through induction and lesson topics. Equality and diversity training has been successful in supporting staff to include topics in lessons.

What does DMBC need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning for pre-entry learners to ensure that topics are suitable to meet their learning needs; use resources, including the virtual learning environment, to support learning concepts.
- Ensure that learning support is effectively planned in lessons and that tutors and support workers agree and understand strategies for support and the expected learning outcomes.
- Identify those learners who are to undertake a qualification through initial assessment and plan for the achievement of the qualification earlier in the learning programme.

Family learning

Grade 2

Context

30. The service offers family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) and wider family learning (WFL) programmes through taster workshops, short and longer courses. Provision is delivered by 19 tutors, mainly core staff from the service and a small amount by staff from partner organisations. Learners are offered the opportunity to work towards certificates in literacy and numeracy or a range of other qualifications. At the time of the inspection, 662 learners were enrolled. Most learners are women, and 29% are from a minority ethnic heritage. The provision is co-ordinated by the family learning manager.

Key findings

- Learners enjoy family learning sessions and achieve well. They make significant gains in developing their confidence to learn and their ability to support their children. Attendance and retention on courses is generally good, although this varies across courses and different groups of learners. For example in 2010/11 the retention of learners from minority ethnics groups was lower than that for the service overall.
- Learners' progress is good in most sessions. They gain increased knowledge and skills in literacy, numeracy and a range of other topics, such as family safety, healthy living and budgeting. They also improve their skills in helping their children to learn, and strategies for managing children's behaviour. Schools report improved attendance and achievement of children whose families attend courses.
- As a result of their attendance at family learning sessions, many parents become more actively involved with their child's school. They have a better understanding of terminology and techniques used in their children's classes, for example how numeracy is taught, which enables them to help with school work. Many become more actively involved with the school, progress to further learning, act as volunteers or gain paid work as a result of their increased confidence and skills.
- Learners who take accreditation achieve well. In 2010/11, almost all learners who entered for level one numeracy or literacy tests passed and the pass rate for level two courses was also high. In addition, over 70 learners on wider family learning courses achieved units of accreditation.
- Teaching and learning are good. Tutors skilfully plan sessions that are enjoyable and stimulating. They use an imaginative range of resources that help parents to practice skills in the sessions, and carry out follow-up activities at home. Practical work is used extensively and staff are very effective at modelling how to work with children. For example, in a behaviour management session, parents were able to watch a teacher working with their children and learn strategies to try at home.

- Tutors generally assess learners' prior knowledge well and use the results effectively in planning learning. Occasionally, there is not enough emphasis on meeting individual needs when planning or delivering sessions. Learners' progress is generally monitored well. In a few cases, tutors ask questions that are too superficial to check understanding, or do not consolidate learning before moving on to the next activity.
- The range of provision effectively meets the needs of learners. Courses are offered across a wide range of settings and times. Clear progression opportunities exist. The range of courses is innovative and extensive including learning how to use music with young children, numeracy in fun science activities delivered in partnership with a secondary school, and improving communication with your child via sporting activities. A few courses fail to recruit sufficient numbers to continue.
- Partnership work is excellent. The service works very well with a range of partners, including schools, children's centres, and the voluntary sector to target provision where it is most needed. Partners speak highly of the service's responsiveness, and how it helps them to engage hard-to-reach families, and those in vulnerable situations.
- Support provided by tutors is excellent. Learners report how safe and welcoming the service is, and the extent to which tutors offer personal support throughout the course, and after it has ended. Specialist support for learners with language needs, or those with learning difficulties, is satisfactory. In a small number of sessions, insufficient specialist support hampers the progress of these learners. Advice and guidance is readily available to help learners move on to the next step.
- The provision is led and managed well. Communication within the team is good, and staff are supported well to carry out their roles. The quality of the provision is monitored very effectively. Staff have appropriate qualifications and benefit from carefully targeted staff development activities. Resources to support learning are good. Self assessment is thorough and managers have a good understanding of areas for further development. The views of learners are taken into account well in developing provision.
- Safeguarding procedures are very good. Risk assessments are carried out well, and health and safety is reinforced rigorously in sessions. Staff are trained well in the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is monitored very effectively at regular team meetings and through quality monitoring visits to sessions.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The service has increased the level of participation by males since the last inspection, and further work is planned to extend this. Tutors increasingly build awareness of equality and diversity into sessions, but this is not yet fully developed. The service is successful at targeting courses at a wide range of groups, for example work with traveller communities.

What does DMBC need to do to improve further?

- Increase the sharing of good practice in the use of questioning, and other techniques to check learning, so that in all sessions tutors ensure learners' understanding is secure before moving on.
- Investigate further strategies to ensure specialist support is available for learners with additional needs, and monitor the effectiveness of this support.

Information about the inspection

31. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's quality improvement manager as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's monitoring visit and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
32. Inspectors used group, individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners had completed on behalf of the provider. They also visited learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Learning types: 14-16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships. **Social and personal development:** all adult safeguarded provision

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners	3,527	3,527
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
How well do learners progress?	1	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
Do learners feel safe?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1	
Quality of provision	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2	
How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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