

Middlesbrough Council

Inspection report

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Name of lead inspector: Bob Busby HMI

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Type of provider: Local authority
Middlesbrough Council Learning Services
The Southlands Centre

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Information about the provider

1. Middlesbrough Council Learning Services (MCLS) provides adult education and work-based learning. Both services work closely together to develop opportunities for learners and employers. They are accountable to the Assistant Director of Children's Trust and Performance, which is part of the Children, Families and Learning Directorate.
2. Middlesbrough Adult Education provides educational opportunities for adult learners and employees. Work-based learning provides educational opportunities, mainly for post-16 learners. The two services deliver a range of programmes that include apprenticeships, Foundation Learning, family learning, learning for pleasure and employability courses. Most learners come from the Middlesbrough area. MCLS works with a large number of partners from statutory and voluntary sectors. Its three main centres are in areas of disadvantage. Outreach courses are offered throughout Middlesbrough, in over 70 different venues.
3. The majority of learning is delivered directly. MCLS subcontracts the provision of four apprenticeship areas and vocational entry level and level 1 accreditation for learners on Entry to Employment (E2E) and Foundation Learning programmes. The main subcontractor, Mouchel, is a strategic partner of the council. Currently, 2,216 learners attend learning programmes. Almost all learners are adults and most attend community provision. Fifty-nine per cent of courses are non-accredited and most are entry, level 1 and taster courses. Courses are offered in 11 subject areas, along with community development and family learning, in community venues, schools and pre-school settings. Twenty-eight per cent of learners have qualifications below level 2 and the majority of learners are women. Approximately 16% of learners are from minority-ethnic backgrounds, 4% have a disability, and 47% live in the most deprived areas.
4. A small proportion of learners follow Train to Gain programmes or apprenticeships; most are employed by the council or in the community. Fifty-one per cent of work-based learners have done no formal learning since leaving school.
5. The proportion of unemployed people in Middlesbrough, between July 2009 and June 2010 was 13%, higher than the regional average and the national rate of 7.7%. In 2009, approximately 37% of pupils achieved five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics, well below the national average for maintained schools. Almost 4% of residents are Asian or Asian British: Pakistani.
6. The following organisations provide training on behalf of Middlesbrough Council:
 - Accent Regeneration and Community Partnerships (Foundation Learning/E2E)
 - Actions Limited (Foundation Learning/E2E)
 - Askham Bryan College (horticulture/environmental conservation)

- Mouchel (business administration)
- Northumbrian Trust Day Nurseries Limited (childcare)
- Redcar and Cleveland Council (community development/youth work)
- Unity City Academy (sports and leisure)

Type of provision	Number of learners in 2009/10
<p>Young learner provision: Foundation learning</p> <p>Entry to Employment</p>	<p>21 part-time learners</p> <p>78 learners</p>
<p>Adult learner provision: Learning for qualifications</p> <p>Learning for social and personal development</p>	<p>1,514 part-time learners</p> <p>4,796 part-time learners</p>
<p>Employer provision: Train to Gain</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p>	<p>77 learners</p> <p>127 apprentices</p>

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Learning for qualifications in employment	Grade
Business, administration and law	2

Learning for social and personal development	Grade
Information and communications technology	2
Arts media and publishing	2
Preparation for life and work	2

Overall effectiveness

7. Learners make good progress and achieve well in their qualifications. The numbers who are successful are rising and above the averages achieved nationally. Learners' skills, increased confidence and self-esteem help them at work and in their personal and social lives. Most learners complete their courses on non-accredited provision, but tutors do not always set learners sufficiently specific learning goals or record their progress towards achieving course learning outcomes. This makes it difficult to judge whether they have achieved their goals. Some learners contribute to their communities through paid or voluntary work.
8. MCLS provides good quality education for its learners. Learning sessions are well planned and include a good variety of teaching methods and resources.

Classrooms are well equipped with good access to information and learning technology (ILT) resources. Learners enjoy their classes and are kept well informed of their progress. The range of provision across the area is good and is supported by very effective partnerships, mostly with the public sector and voluntary organisations. Apprenticeships are well promoted. However, the service recognises the need to develop more partnerships with a broader range of employers.

9. MCLS leads and manages its provision well. Its arrangements for ensuring that learners are safe are thorough. MCLS prioritises widening participation and has very successfully attracted learners from its most disadvantaged wards to recruit hard-to-reach learners such as those in traveller communities. The quality of accommodation and specialist resources to support teaching and learning are good.
10. Although MCLS places a good focus on improvement, its arrangements to quality assure the provision are inconsistent. Self-assessment processes are thorough, include suitable consultation with staff, partners and subcontractors and consider the views of learners and employers. The self-assessment report covers all of MCLS' work. The report's development plan, is detailed and generally accurate. However, the quality-assurance system does not effectively ensure that subcontractors improve their performance. Teaching and learning and other learner processes are not sufficiently well monitored.

Main findings

- Success rates on adult-learner provision, leading to qualifications, are high, well above national rates at all levels. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes at level 3 were very high in 2009/10. The completion within planned timescale rates are also good at level 3 and well above national rates. Success rates and completion within planned timescale rates for apprentices are above national rates for all ages and at all levels. Progression rates from E2E programmes into further training education or employment are high.
- On non-accredited programmes retention rates are high. However, the arrangements for the recognition and recording of progress and achievement (RARPA) are not sufficiently reliable to validate achievement rates. Tutors do not always sufficiently set learners specific learning goals and record their progress towards achieving course learning outcomes. Learners grow in confidence and some make effective contributions within their community.
- Learning sessions are well planned and some make good arrangements for learners' different learning needs. Tutors use a good variety of teaching methods and resources. Classrooms are well equipped with good access to ILT resources, which are well used in many classes. Learners enjoy their classes and are kept well informed of their progress. They recognise and value their improving skills and confidence. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced.
- The effectiveness of initial advice and guidance varies. In-class support for mixed-level, mixed-ability classes and specialist learning support for learners

who have declared a learning difficulty and/or disability is good. However, initial assessment does not always identify those who would benefit from support. Course information does not always clarify pre-course requirements or progression opportunities. Links to other agencies specialising in support services are insufficiently formal.

- MCLS offers a broad range of programmes and promotes life-long learning well, redressing some of the poor educational experiences of learners. It very successfully recruits new learners to the provision; a significant number progress to other courses within the service. Work to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education or training is effective.
- The service has well-developed partnerships, mostly with the public sector and voluntary organisations, to help identify learning needs, develop courses and share venues. However, it recognises the need to develop more partnerships with a broader range of employers.
- The operational management of MCLS is good. Arrangements for the management of subcontractors are satisfactory. However, the service acknowledges the need to accelerate the pace of improvements with some of its subcontractors. The council's arrangements to oversee the development of the department are satisfactory. However, it has been slow to implement change and its vision of a unified service.
- The council's good arrangements for safeguarding learners exceed government legislative requirements. Awareness, amongst staff and learners, of safeguarding is good. Staff are trained beyond the required levels; easily accessible online learning modules are available for refresher training. MCLS focuses well on promoting safe use of the internet and uses the virtual learning environment (VLE) well to promote and reinforce safeguarding. Work-based learners and employers are less well informed of the arrangements to safeguard learners.
- The service monitors the impact of its equality and diversity policies and procedures on different groups of learners well and redresses any issues identified. In some learning sessions tutors promote equality and diversity well. However, many tutors miss opportunities to broaden learners' knowledge and views of equality and diversity.
- MCLS consults well with learners, partners and employers, many of whom are from other council departments, to improve its provision. The service uses technology particularly well to collect learners' views and comments. MCLS provides training and staff development to its subcontractors and partners to improve the experience of learners and promote sharing of good practice.
- Quality-improvement arrangements are satisfactory and the self-assessment process is effective. However, the process for implementing the identified improvements in the subcontractors is not always effective. Observers of teaching and learning put too much emphasis on the contribution of tutors. The observation of the teaching and learning process does not sufficiently inform staff development.

- The service offers good value for money. It makes good use of information technology in many aspects of its processes. The use of funds to widen participation and promote lifelong learning is good. The quality and availability of resources are generally good. However, the availability and use of ILT equipment in some venues needs further improvement.

What does Middlesbrough Council need to do to improve further?

- For all learners in non-accredited provision, negotiate, agree and plan detailed learning objectives which learners need to achieve within a specific timescale. Ensure that learners' progress and achievement of their learning objectives is clearly monitored and recorded.
- Improve and embed initial advice and guidance by thoroughly assessing learners' previous experience and skills so that their skill level is sufficient to benefit from the course. Ensure that all learners have a good understanding of progression opportunities.
- Accelerate management of the pace of change so that the services staff, at all levels, are clear about the final unified structure and their roles and responsibilities within it.
- Ensure that tutors promote equality and diversity systematically in all teaching and learning processes by using relevant examples, case studies, discussions and activities. Monitor learners' understanding of equality and diversity to ensure that they have developed good knowledge of the area.
- Ensure that all aspects of quality systems are implemented well so that good practice is disseminated systematically. Use the findings of quality processes, particularly observations of teaching and learning, to inform staff development activities and monitor the impact of these developments.
- Enforce service level agreements to ensure that all subcontractors implement the agreed action plans to improve the quality of all aspects of their training.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- gaining qualifications and certificates
- interesting topics and tasks to assist learning
- obtaining skills to aid career progression or gain employment
- help in improving personal skills, confidence and self-esteem
- good support from patient, friendly, helpful staff who explain things clearly
- gaining work experience at the same time as training
- being treated with respect
- the friendly learning environment
- tutors who are passionate about learners succeeding

- meeting new people in the same situation
- locally accessible classes delivered very flexibly.

What learners would like to see improved:

- better notification of cancelled classes
- fewer classes being cancelled due to low attendance
- better prior information about courses and progression opportunities, particularly during the year
- the software available not matching software at home
- more information on safeguarding
- to be able to come to classes with their tutor more than once a week
- more help with the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ).

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

What employers/stakeholders/partners like:

- the staff are genuinely interested in helping young people
- the range of programmes available to develop employers' staff
- the role of the programme in instilling a sense of pride and respect
- the flexibility of the staff and programmes in fitting in with everyday work
- the quality of young people on work placement and their preparedness for employment.

What employers/stakeholders/partners would like to see improved:

- more effective reviews of progress
- more feedback on what learners do at the training centre to assist in gathering evidence in the workplace
- more information on the structure of the NVQ and the content of NVQ units
- more emphasis on training to develop new skills and less on finding evidence of existing skills.

Main inspection findings

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

11. The service has maintained the overall quality of its provision and improved the provision in arts and crafts despite a period of management and staffing uncertainties. Outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management are good. Work-based learners achieve well and learners significantly improve their confidence and develop good skills for work and for improving many aspects of their lives, for example, in progressing to employment or education. MCLS contributes well to the council's strategic priorities and regeneration policies through good partnership working. The service's arrangement for the management of its subcontractors is satisfactory. However, the pace of improvements in some subcontractors is too slow. The active promotion of equality and diversity in all aspects of teaching and learning is not sufficiently consistent.
12. The self-assessment process is effective and inclusive. The report accurately identifies most strengths, although it has not fully recognised all areas for improvement identified during the inspection. Most managers and staff are clear about the actions for improvements which are generally being implemented satisfactorily. However, some aspects of the quality system are not effective in ensuring that all aspects of teaching and learning are improved. For instance, the quality of RARPA continues to be inconsistent as found at the previous inspection.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

13. Success rates on adult provision leading to qualifications are high, well above national rates at all levels. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes at level 3 were very high in 2009/10. The completion within planned timescale rates at level 3 are also well above national rates. Success rates and completion within planned timescale rates for apprentices are above national rates at all age groups and all levels. Progression rates from E2E programmes into further training, education or employment are high. Current learners make good progress and attain good vocational and personal skills.
14. Men perform slightly better than women on adult provision leading to qualifications but both groups achieve more highly than the national rates. The number of learners from minority-ethnic communities is too low for statistical analysis but most have success rates higher than the national rate. Learners who declared a learning difficulty and/or disability succeed better than the rate for learners nationally. Success rates on Skills for Life qualifications are high; 12 percentage points above the national rates. Apprentices in business, administration and law succeed very well at all levels and all age groups.
15. Retention rates of learners on non-accredited courses are high; however, RARPA arrangements are not sufficiently reliable to validate their achievement rates. The service has suitable policies for planning, recognising and recording

progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. However, tutors do not always set learners sufficiently specific learning goals and record their progress in relation to the course learning outcomes.

16. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes continue to improve but were still five percentage points below national rates in 2009/10, mainly due to lower success rates at level 2. The completion rates within planned timescale on Train to Gain programmes also significantly improved in 2009/10 and are now comparable with national rates. On Train to Gain programmes, success rates for women are in line with national rates, and higher than those for men. More women achieve within their planned timescale.
17. On apprenticeships, at level 2, success rates for women are higher than national rates, and higher than those for men. The completion within planned timescale rates for women are also high.
18. Learners make good progress and enjoy their learning. They develop good skills and gain significantly in confidence and self-esteem. Some learners' qualifications help them progress at work; others build confidence to use their skills in their personal and social lives. Learners feel safe in their learning environment and comfortable within their peer groups. Some learners go on to make a positive contribution to the community, for example, as teachers and support workers, helping to run local clubs and societies or performing music in public.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

19. Teaching and learning are good. Sessions are well planned, and some show effective planning to meet the different learning needs of individual learners. Tutors use a good variety of teaching methods and resources. Classrooms are well equipped. The good access to ILT resources is well used in many classes, particularly in languages, where the VLE is well used; an 'emporium' has been established to enable learners to converse with native speakers in several languages. Learners are kept well informed of the progress they are making and value their improving skills and confidence. Peer support is encouraged in classes to motivate and promote progress. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced and have good access to professional development. Some teaching does not take enough account of different ability levels.
20. MCLS offers a broad range of programmes to enhance the regeneration of the borough. The service promotes life-long learning, including work-based learning, well and redresses some of the poor prior experiences of learners. The service is very successful in recruiting new learners and a significant number choose to progress to other courses within the service. MCLS offers provision for a number of employers. Much provision takes place in deprived wards with good accessibility for many learners. MCLS has developed courses to meet the specific needs of vulnerable learners, such as people with mental health issues, substance misusers and women who do not feel confident to learn with male learners. Clear progression opportunities exist for many courses within the

service and to partners' provision. However, learners are concerned about the relocation of some provision. Work to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education or training is effective. For example, the development of the Foundation Learning Tier qualification framework is engaging learners aged 16 and over who have left school with few qualifications.

21. The service has well-developed partnerships particularly with public sector and voluntary organisations to plan, coordinate and deliver programmes. Some partners focus specifically on supporting people with mental health issues who are in secure establishments. The service has worked well with unions to promote the Union Learn initiative. Strategic partnership work is generally effective, for example, in developing provision for the council's departments. However, partnership working is insufficiently developed in arts and crafts. The service has used its partnerships with national organisations particularly well to improve its provision, such as in securing funds to develop its VLE. MCLS uses partners well to provide work-placements, but the service acknowledges the need to develop partnerships with a more diverse range of employers. It is revising its employer engagement policy to support this development.
22. Support arrangements are satisfactory. Specialist support for learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability is good. Adaptive equipment is available where needed and the service provides good in-class support for mixed-level, mixed-ability classes. However, links to other agencies specialising in support services are insufficiently formal. Initial advice and guidance is satisfactory but initial assessment does not always identify those who would benefit from support. Many learners were unsure of progression opportunities, or had difficulty finding out about courses starting part-way through the year. Information provided for administration learners and their line managers is not sufficient to inform how well they are progressing: it is often either inaccurate or too generic. The service relies heavily on volunteers to provide close support for learners.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

23. The operational management of MCLS is good. It has successfully resolved a significant number of weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Communication with partners and stakeholders are good. Management information is used well to plan the provision. The service's arrangements for the management of its subcontractors are satisfactory. MCLS provides training and staff development to its subcontractors and partners to improve the experience of learners and promotes sharing of good practice. However, it acknowledges the need to do more to increase the pace of implementation of agreed improvements with some subcontractors. The service is not effectively demanding sustained and reliable improvements in all aspects of training from some subcontractors.
24. MCLS meets the strategic priorities of the council effectively. To improve the service's contribution to its strategic and operational priorities, the council decided, in 2009, to work towards restructuring the two services into a unified

service. However, the council acknowledges the pace of implementation has been slow; staff are uncertain about their roles and responsibilities in the future of the unified service and the two services have a number of different policies and procedures. This slow management of change has contributed to the leadership and management of the areas of learning generally being weaker than learner outcomes and quality of provision. The council's supervisory arrangements for overseeing the development of the department are satisfactory.

25. The council's arrangements for safeguarding learners are good. They exceed government legislative requirements. Safe-learner posters are displayed in all venues. Awareness amongst staff and learners of safeguarding is good. Staff are trained beyond the required levels and easily accessible online modules are available for refresher training and for training of new staff. MCLS focuses well on promoting safe use of the internet and uses the VLE well to actively promote and reinforce safeguarding. The particularly thorough online safeguarding ensures that learners have a very good awareness of dangers, the arrangements in place for their protection and how to protect themselves. Learners have a good awareness of safe working practices, and how to keep their computers and personal data secure. Work-based learners and employers are less well informed of the arrangements to safeguard learners. The subcontractor does not sufficiently promote safeguarding to business administration learners and their line managers; safeguarding is not adequately reinforced throughout the business administration programme.
26. The promotion of equality and diversity are good. The service has very successfully attracted learners from the most disadvantaged wards in its community. It has worked hard to engage hard-to-reach learners such as those in traveller communities. MCLS uses data well to monitor the performance of different groups of learners and it has successfully narrowed the achievement gap for all learners. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of learners. The service effectively monitors the impact of its policies and procedures on different groups of learners and redresses any identified issues. For example, it has changed its enrolment form so that learners can indicate a broader range of disabilities. The service sets and meets annual targets for the participation of under-represented groups of learners on its programmes. For example, the overall proportion of black and ethnic-minority learners is significantly higher than the proportion in the local community; in work-based learning the number of learners from minority groups is very low. All staff are trained in equality of opportunity and diversity. Learners are treated with dignity and respect and most venues are accessible. In some teaching sessions tutors promote equality and diversity well, however, many tutors do not sufficiently broaden learners' knowledge and views of equality and diversity.
27. MCLS consults appropriately with learners, partners and employers, including employers from other council's departments, to improve its provision. The use of learner focus groups to improve provision is well-developed in adult education provision, but it is less structured in work-based learning. The service

uses technology particularly well to survey learners' views, which includes direct email to the service's senior manager.

28. Overall MCLS's quality-improvement arrangements are satisfactory. There are two sets of quality policies and procedures and the service uses the subcontractors' quality systems to monitor the quality of subcontracted provision. Some aspects of quality improvements are not sufficiently effective. For example, the quality and use of RARPA has not improved. The service audits the quality of subcontractors' teaching and learning processes, and adequately identifies issues for improvements. However, procedures for implementing identified improvements are not always effective: although the service identified poor individual learning plans in one subcontractor, their quality has not yet improved.
29. MCLS has a single procedure for observing teaching and learning that is well established. All tutors have been observed during the previous two years. However, observers emphasise too much the contribution of tutors rather than what has been learned and learners' progress. Findings of the lesson observations are moderated but grades awarded are not always supported by the recorded evidence. Observations are not systematically carried out by specialists in the subject areas. Overall, the observation records do not always inform effective staff development activities and prompt follow up of action points. The self-assessment report incorrectly identifies 69% of its teaching as good or better based on internal lesson observations. This is higher than the percentage of lessons judged to be good or better by inspectors.
30. The department's self-assessment process is thorough. It is inclusive of partners', staff's and subcontractors' views, gathered through formal and informal feedback, providing an effective basis for improvements. The development plan, based on the self-assessment report, is detailed and generally accurate. The service is making appropriate progress towards its full implementation.
31. The service offers good value for money. It makes good use of information technology in many aspects of its processes. The use of funds to widen participation, promote lifelong learning and contributing towards improving outcomes for the communities is good. The quality and availability of resources are generally good. However, the availability and use of ILT equipment in some venues needs further improvement. The service recognises the need to significantly increase the pace of development of a single set of policies and procedures for all its teaching and learning processes.

Subject areas

Learning for qualifications in employment

Other learning for qualifications in employment provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: Health, public services and care; Agriculture, horticulture and animal care.

Business, administration and law

Grade 2

Context

32. MCLS provides apprenticeships in business administration and customer service from intermediate through to advanced level. The majority of employers are either departments or divisions within the council or affiliated employers. Business administration is the largest programme with 68 learners; it is wholly sub-contracted to Mouchel. Of these, 52 apprentices are at intermediate level and 16 are at advanced level. There are seven customer service apprentices all at intermediate level. Of the 75 total learners, 55 are aged 16 to 18 with the rest aged 19 and over. Thirty-two per cent of learners are men and 2% are from minority-ethnic groups.

Key findings

- Outcomes are very good for apprentices and excellent for advanced apprentices in business administration, where they are significantly above the national averages. Progress for all learners, including current customer service learners, is good. Learners are developing very good vocational skills across a wide range of work tasks and responsibilities producing high-quality work.
- Learners are making good progress with the vast majority achieving within their planned programme length. All advanced apprentices in business administration achieve within their planned programme length. Attendance and punctuality is very good. Learners feel safe and all have training in healthy lifestyle and sustainability.
- The induction programme is very effective in preparing learners for the workplace. The better sessions use a good range of different learning activities. In the administration training sessions action planning with learners is poor. External assessments are not planned to coincide with completion of theory.
- Assessment practice is excellent in customer service with thorough assessment planning and feedback. In administration, assessment in the workplace is infrequent. Verification activity in administration is primarily focused on the portfolio. Little internal verification activity in the workplace and no documented standardisation meetings take place.
- Target-setting for administration learners is poor. The individual learning plan is poorly completed. Learners and their line managers do not know how well they are progressing; information provided is either inaccurate or too generic.

Progress reviews are satisfactory with good involvement of managers and a very effective focus on the learners' development in their job.

- Progression into jobs and further education and training is good for administration learners. Some of the customer service learners have progressed from E2E. The council is proud of its apprentices and frequently certificates internal training and provides an annual celebration event in the council chambers presided over by the Mayor.
- Very effective relationships exist with employers, several having worked with the apprenticeship programme for many years. Employers receive regular communications and are involved in the choice of optional units. In many cases learners are given mentors. There are too few employers outside of the public sector working with the council programme.
- Guidance and support are good. Learners receive very good guidance on how to get a job; this is a significant focus during the programme. Pastoral support is good with regular contact provided to learners. Effective use is made of previous qualifications and experiences.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory with regular contract and team meetings. Data are used well by the council to monitor the contract against key performance indicators. The subcontractor's staff complete a good range of training. However, the subcontractor's appraisal programme does not set appropriate targets for the staff to improve performance.
- The council's quality system is not effectively ensuring the subcontractor improves its performance. Regular audits and observations of teaching and learning take place but the subcontractor is not acting upon the feedback. The subcontractor does not have sufficient systems of its own.
- The subcontractor does not sufficiently promote safeguarding to learners and their line managers. Safeguarding is not adequately reinforced through the training sessions and progress reviews. The council does this well for customer service learners; it provides additional risk assessments and takes legal advice about changes to shift patterns for young people.
- A good range of initiatives are used to seek feedback and involvement from learners and their line managers in improving the programme. Improvements have followed feedback from learners. Equality and diversity is reinforced well with learners. The programme is not promoted well enough to learners from minority-ethnic backgrounds.
- The self-assessment process is rigorous and the subcontractor is fully involved. The quality improvement plan is regularly up-dated but the findings from the audits and contract meetings are not linked. The self-assessment report accurately reports the strengths of provision but does not identify all of the areas of improvement.

What does Middlesbrough Council need to do to improve further?

- Consolidate the high success rates and progress of all learners by more assertively targeting the completion of individual components of the framework at an earlier point in the programme.
- Implement a rigorous quality system to ensure that the subcontractor improves the quality and scope of internal verification and to promote engagement with the customer service programme.
- Ensure the subcontractor further improves its use of data so that it responds proactively and imaginatively to identified issues and targets, such as safeguarding and inclusion of learners from minority-ethnic groups.

Learning for social and personal development

Other social and personal development learning provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: Retail and commercial enterprise, leisure travel and tourism, History, philosophy and theology, languages literature and culture, Education and training, Community development, Family learning

Information and communications technology

Grade 2

Context

33. A full-time interim curriculum manager, one full-time and seven part-time teachers support 123 learners generating 155 enrolments on 19 courses. A further 27 learners are improving their Information Technology skills as part of the UK Online initiative. Subjects offered include using common IT programs and the internet, and digital imaging. They range from beginners' courses to advanced level. Learners attend one of the three main learning centres, or one of the five community venues. Fifty-eight per cent of learners are women, 80% are White British; 34% are aged 60 or older.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates for most learners on shorter courses are high and exceed national averages at around 90%. Attendance is good. A smaller proportion of learners on longer courses achieved a success rate of 70%, in line with national averages. Learners on Train to Gain programmes made slow progress and only half completed in the expected time.
- Learners make good progress and gain significantly in confidence and self-esteem. In digital imaging particularly, learners develop good practical skills. Others become adept at using the internet and develop computer skills potentially valuable to employers. Some go on to make a positive contribution to the community, for example, by going on to become teachers and support workers, or using their IT skills to help run local clubs.
- Most teaching is good, and some is outstanding. Enthusiastic tutors provide good support in well-equipped classrooms. Some tutors match work to individual learners' interests and ensure all learners are challenged appropriately at all times. Others have yet to develop this practice. Tutors make good use of ILT, such as screen projectors and a VLE, to make resources accessible over the internet.
- The service meets the needs and interests of users and uses partnerships well. The council, Jobcentre Plus and specialist support agencies refer learners. Venues meet the council's priorities of widening participation, though planned closures will disadvantage some learners. Partnerships with UK Online and local organisations enable learners to access learning. The service also engages very well with other bodies to develop the use of ILT.
- Support for learners with additional needs is good and their success rates exceed those of their peers. Many tutors provide extra support: helping learners

with their home laptops and using email to support learners remotely. Some information and guidance provided to learners is unsatisfactory. Course information does not always clearly identify pre-required skills for the course. Initial assessment does not always identify those who would benefit from support. Many learners were unsure of progression opportunities, or had difficulty finding out about courses starting part-way through the year.

- Active promotion of safeguarding makes learners very aware of the issues. Online safeguarding is particularly thorough, and learners have a very good awareness of the dangers, the arrangements in place for their protection and how to protect themselves. Learners have a good awareness of safe IT working practices and how to keep their computers and personal data secure.
- Managers have a clear strategy for developing the curriculum. They use local information well to implement local and national strategies. Staff are insufficiently aware of their targets for achievement and retention, and are unclear on how IT relates to MCLS' overall strategy. The innovative ILT continues to be developed, but tutors are not yet sufficiently aware of how to fully exploit its pedagogical potential.
- Managers analyse participation and outcomes of different groups well. They are particularly effective at recruiting difficult to reach learners, such as those from disadvantaged areas or with learning, physical or mental health difficulties. A minority of tutors ensure that handouts and classroom tasks promote diversity where possible. Managers recognise the need to share this good practice more widely, and further training is planned.
- Quality improvement processes are satisfactory. Courses are reviewed and feedback obtained from learners. These are satisfactory in generating improvements. The self-assessment report was broadly accurate. Although it did not recognise weaknesses in the observations of teaching and learning programme, it proposed the same grade proposed by inspectors. The need to cater better for learners' individual needs, identified at the previous inspection, is still apparent.
- Observations of teaching and learning are ineffective. Many focus too much on teaching rather than learning, especially when observers are not IT specialists. Often, norms are described as strengths and some sessions are over-graded. Areas for improvement are often clear, but these are not followed up systematically to ensure the tutor has improved their practice. Good practice identified in observations is not shared routinely.
- Value for money is good. Learners have high success and retention rates. The service secures substantial external funding to continue to develop ILT and improve learning resources for learners. IT technical staff are careful to use free software and other low-cost options to maintain the IT infrastructure. Partnerships with UK Online and community venues provide learners with access to further learning infrastructure.

What does Middlesbrough Council need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all paper based and online information identifies any skills required by learners before starting the course and check whether learners have these skills as early as possible in the course. Make information for courses starting after September accessible to new learners as easily as to those progressing.
- Promote the sharing of good practice. Ensure that observations of teaching and learning identify good practice to be shared; set up a programme of regular meetings where this can take place, supported by learning coaches; support the development of pedagogical skills for online learning; consider a buddy system for tutors new to the service and peer observations to enable tutors to gain first-hand experience of alternative practices.
- Further promote diversity in the classroom by developing tutors' skills and sharing existing good practice in the design of classroom resources. Establish a procedure for reviewing the effectiveness of classroom resources in this regard.

Arts, media and publishing

Grade 2

Context

34. The arts, media and publishing programme has 12 part-time tutors managed by one part-time curriculum coordinator. In 2010/11, 512 learners, making 872 enrolments, attend classes in pottery, dressmaking, photography, painting and drawing, textiles, stained glass and other craft subjects. Of these 76% are women, 1.6% are aged 18 or under, 7% declare a disability and 5.6% are from a minority-ethnic background. Classes are delivered in 14 centres across Middlesbrough.

Key findings

- Learners' levels of enjoyment, motivation and enthusiasm are high in all sessions. Retention rates for 2009/10 are very high. Very few learners take the opportunity to gain accreditation. Seven out of eight learners achieved their chosen Open College Network qualification in 2009/10.
- Learners develop excellent practical and professional skills that enable them to produce work of a high standard. Examples include accurate cutting and leading of glass for stained glass panels and 'Tiffany' style lamp shades designed and made by learners, highly creative experimental textile work supported by annotated sketchbooks and professional standard photographs with emphasis on composition, tone and texture.
- Learners feel safe in their learning environment and comfortable within their peer groups. A few learners sell their work and gain significantly increased confidence through exhibiting publicly as a group or individually. Tutors organise excellent opportunities for music learners who are able to perform in public at monthly gigs. Many learners, particularly those in danger of social isolation, gain immense social benefit from attending classes.
- Teaching and learning are good. Learners use experimentation successfully to develop individual project work. The structure and pace of learning sessions is generally good and learners are developing new skills and knowledge. However, in a minority of sessions the planning of specific and measurable learning objectives is poor and the range of teaching and learning strategies is limited.
- The use of ILT to support learners is excellent. It is embedded well in many sessions and tutors successfully screen live demonstrations enabling craft and music learners to easily see the detail. Learners value the VLE as an excellent accessible method to recap, view learning materials and class work. Class online galleries are extremely valuable for the display of learners' work and to record tutor input.
- Recording of learner progress and achievement is not used effectively to support all learners. Subject specific initial assessment is rarely undertaken and does not sufficiently inform learner's individual goals. In the best sessions learner's progress and achievement are recorded well showing clearly what has been learnt and how learners might improve. However, in too many sessions

monitoring records show neither what skills and knowledge have been learnt nor the standard attained.

- The arts programme adequately meets the needs and interests of learners and is offered widely across Middlesbrough. Most courses have an option for accreditation. However, this option is insufficiently promoted to learners and few choose this. The imminent closure of one key community centre is causing concern to many learners who currently attend.
- Positive working relationships exist with community centres, libraries and specialist organisations such as day centres. Meetings with social services enable joint planning for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Partnerships to enhance the curriculum offer are underdeveloped. Insufficient joint working takes place with community arts, museums and galleries and community development departments within the council.
- Information advice and guidance is satisfactory and is planned in schemes of work during and at the end of courses. A few learners discuss formally their progression opportunities with next step advisors. Support for learners is appropriate. Basic resources and materials are appropriate for each class and often learners can buy more specialised resources. Insufficient support is available for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; the service relies too much on the caring organisation to provide suitable support in classes.
- Curriculum management is good. The new coordinator has significantly improved communication with tutors over the last few months. Tutors engage fully with MCLS' ethos of putting learners at the centre of the process. In-year staff development in the use of ILT and the VLE has enhanced teaching and learning in many sessions. A subject learning coach provides good support enabling tutors to make improvements.
- Health and safety is promoted well and is a priority in most sessions. Tutors ensure that any risks are identified and shared well with learners, particularly where equipment is being used. Promotion of equality and celebration of diversity are satisfactory; learners know their rights and responsibilities. However, too many tutors miss opportunities to enhance learners' understanding of equality and diversity issues.
- The self-assessment report does not sufficiently identify all the main strengths and areas for improvement. The quality improvement plan does not focus sufficiently on the improvements required in setting learners goals and monitoring their progress. Action plans from teaching observations do not always identify the detail of improvements that need to be made.

What does Middlesbrough Council need to do to improve further?

- Implement subject specific initial assessment in all classes that will better inform learners' individual goals and enable tutors to plan for individual learner's needs.
- Further develop practical learner-centred methods of recording progress and achievement as an integral part of the learning process. Ensure that learners

are clear about the progress they are making and what they need to do to attain their learning goals.

- Ensure that learning objectives drive attainment and progress and focus on learning. Share these objectives with learners at the start of all sessions to enable them to be clear about what they will be able to do by the end of the session.
- Further develop community based partnerships, for example, with museums, galleries and community arts initiatives that will enhance the arts curriculum and better meet the needs of learners through positive community engagement. Encourage learners more actively to engage in accreditation to provide better progression opportunities and contribute to their social and economic well-being.

Preparation for life and work

Grade 2

Context

35. Middlesbrough Council currently has 439 adult learners on literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses. Of the 229 ESOL learners, 69% are women. Of the 210 attending literacy or numeracy classes, 73% are women and 14% are from minority-ethnic groups. The service provides ESOL and literacy and numeracy classes at a range of venues across the borough during the day and in the evening. The Foundation Learning programme has 22 young learners, aged 16 to 18, taking courses for vocational, personal and social development and functional skills. This group includes three females and one learner from a minority-ethnic group.

Key findings

- Overall success rates are good at 89% and have improved over the last three years; they are well above the national average. Success rates in entry level 1 ESOL have fallen from the previous year. The number of learners achieving qualifications on ESOL provision is low at 37%.
- Learners develop good literacy, numeracy and language skills. Some learners have gained English and mathematics qualifications to help them progress at work; others are building confidence to use these skills in their personal and social lives. They feel more confident to make phone calls and read newspapers or join voluntary and community groups. Learners enjoy their courses and feel safe and secure in their classes.
- Teaching and learning are good and tutors are well-qualified. In the best sessions learners are set challenging targets and learn enthusiastically using well-produced resources linked to real-life needs. The weaker sessions are insufficiently challenging and place too much reliance on worksheets. Technology is used effectively where it is available. However, tutors miss opportunities to use materials and resources which explore equality and diversity topics.
- The provision of thorough initial and diagnostic assessment linked to clear and measurable targets for learners in the adult provision is outstanding. Targets are reviewed regularly so that learners understand the progress they are making. In Foundation Learning target-setting is often weak with vague targets related to the achievement of qualifications rather than learners' literacy and numeracy needs.
- Provision is well-planned to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups. Learners appreciate being able to attend classes locally and at a time to suit them. Productive partnerships with a wide range of local groups offer further opportunities for learners. Enrichment activities contribute to learners' enjoyment and achievement, for example, there is a 'knit and natter' group for ESOL learners and numeracy learners go on shopping trips to practice their skills.

- The support for learners is good. A team of both paid and volunteer workers offer additional support for individual learners. The information, advice and guidance given by both tutors and specialist advisers, is not systematically embedded across the provision. Some learners have been in the same class for a number of years with insufficient advice about progression.
- Leadership and management are good. The coordinators plan provision well to meet the needs of learners, the community and national priorities. Overall accommodation and resources are satisfactory and in some cases very good, though some venues lack IT resources. One class takes place in a very noisy classroom which disadvantages learners who have specific learning difficulties.
- The coordinators communicate well with the team of tutors who appreciate the ethos of support where their thoughts and comments count and contribute to improvement of the service. All staff have opportunities to attend professional development activities. Tutors use interactive technology effectively to share good practice. Coordinators have improved the appraisal process and set effective individual targets for staff.
- Safeguarding is good and is appropriately prioritised. Safe learner posters are displayed in all venues and tutors give health and safety updates and tips at the start of each session. Most learners show a high level of awareness about safeguarding.
- Coordinators pay too little attention in ensuring that tutors take opportunities to incorporate equality and diversity themes within their resources and teaching. Learners value the culture of mutual respect and support within classes.
- Learner engagement is underdeveloped. Too few opportunities exist for Skills for Life learners to be involved in giving feedback and contributing to shaping and improving the provision. However, learner feedback from questionnaires or course reviews is used by MCLS to make improvements.
- The self-assessment process is satisfactory although not all identified areas for improvement are included in the quality improvement plan. All tutors contribute to self-assessment and are clear about the targets set for their work. Weaknesses identified in teaching observations are not always systematically monitored for improvement.

What does Middlesbrough Council need to do to improve further?

- Review the arrangements for level 2 literacy and numeracy and entry level ESOL to ensure that learners are ready to take and achieve the qualifications.
- Put systems in place to make sure that the effective informal practices around information, advice and guidance and improvements arising from teaching observations are fully embedded.
- Ensure that opportunities are taken to include materials, activities and discussions about equality and diversity themes in classes so that learners gain a greater understanding of their importance and meaning.
- Give learners more opportunities to be involved in giving their views about how to improve the service.

Information about the inspection

36. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Acting Head of Adult Education Service 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 Skills Funding Agency, Framework for Excellence indicators, 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.
37. Inspectors used group, individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of the provider. They also visited learning sessions, assessments or progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Middlesbrough 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	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive	Social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners	115	22	0	93	0
Part-time learners	2101	10	624	13	1454
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2				
A. Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2	2
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	2				
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
A3. Do learners feel safe?	2				
A4. <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3				
A5. <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3				
B. Quality of provision	2	2	2	2	2
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3				
C. Leadership and management	2	2	2	2	2
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
C2. <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3				
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2				
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3				
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3				
C7. 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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