

# Birmingham City Council

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 50213

**Name of lead inspector:** Harmesh Manghra HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 25 March 2011

**Type of provider:** Local Authority  
Birmingham Adult Education Service  
2nd Floor, Central Library

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## Information about the provider

1. Amongst the local authorities, Birmingham City Council holds the largest publicly funded contract by value in the country with the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency. Birmingham Adult Education Service (BAES, the service), on behalf of the city council, provides learning programmes in 12 subject areas. It provides accredited courses for learners aged 16 to 18 and adult learners, Train to Gain for employed learners and non-accredited programmes for adults. Some 56% of the provision across the service is learner responsive and 5% of the total income is from privately funded learners on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses. The service's mission is to provide learning that enables adults and communities to develop and succeed.
2. BAES is located in the council's directorate for adults and communities. The interim head of service, four senior managers, 300 business support and teaching staff along with 650 hourly-paid tutors teach and support learners. The service provides learning from nine main centres and more than 400 smaller venues. In 2009/10, some 24,336 learners made 26,899 enrolments on 3,500 courses.
3. According to the 2001 census, approximately 31% of the population of Birmingham of over one million was from a minority ethnic background. Pakistanis are the single largest minority group. In 2009/10, 60% of the learners came from postcodes that cover areas of high deprivation and 74% were eligible for fee remission. Birmingham's unemployment rate was 11.4% in February 2011, as against a rate of 6.4% for the West Midlands. In 2010, 55% of school pupils in Birmingham achieved five GCSEs grades at C and above including English and Maths. This matches the national rates.
4. Since the previous inspection in 2007, the service has reduced the percentage of learners on programmes at level 1 or below by 10% to 66% and has increased the learners on level 2 by 8%. Programmes with the largest number of learners are preparation for life and work, languages and arts, media and publishing.

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of learners in (2009/10)</b>
<b>Provision for young learners:</b> Further Education (16-18)	450 part-time learners
<b>Provision for adult learners:</b> Learning for qualifications  Learning for social and personal development	11,818 part-time learners  11,908 part-time learners
<b>Employer provision:</b> Train to Gain	124 learners

## Summary report

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
<b>Learning for qualifications</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Childcare and teaching assistants	3
Information communications technology for users	2
Modern foreign languages	2
Literacy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)	4
<b>Learning for social and personal development</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Family Learning	2

## Overall effectiveness

5. Learners of all ages achieve their qualifications satisfactorily. Success rates are good and improving in science and maths, retail, and commercial enterprise, modern foreign languages and family learning. Success rates are also good in information technologies and show good in year improvement. The standard of learners' work is particularly good in these subjects. Most learners improve their self-confidence, vocational knowledge and employment related skills to a high level in most subject areas. Learners from the most disadvantaged communities and neighbourhoods on specific projects make considerable progress relative to their prior achievements. Most employed learners improve their skills sharply and gain qualifications appropriately. A significant number of learners on

qualification-based courses in arts, media and publishing, childcare and teaching assistants, literacy, ESOL and business administration have left the programmes without achieving any qualifications.

6. Most learners enjoy learning and are highly satisfied. They enjoy using their skills to help their communities and families. Learners feel safe and secure at the easily accessible learning venues. However the majority of these venues have poor facilities and need some refurbishment.
7. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Highly experienced and well qualified tutors plan lessons well with clear objectives, whilst using a variety of activities and learning materials that reflect their learners' lives. The quality of work-based learning for employed learners is satisfactory. Partnerships are outstanding at engaging new learners and support them to progress. Care, guidance and support for the learners are satisfactory; however, BAES does not fully know the progression of its learners.
8. Leaders and managers have dealt successfully with the many challenges facing the service. Its arrangements to check the credentials and background of the tutors and protect learners are strong. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The service knows its provision well and has a satisfactory action plan and capacity to maintain strengths and deal with the areas for improvements.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners including achievement of qualifications are satisfactory overall. Success rates are broadly satisfactory on both long and short courses, most being either at or above national averages. Outcomes for learners in literacy and ESOL are inadequate.
- Most learners demonstrate a significant improvement in personal confidence and motivation from the early stages of their courses. On the majority of programmes, learners develop good technical, personal and employment related skills.
- Retention rates have improved in the previous years and are high in most non-accredited learning. However, retention rates are low for accredited courses in arts, media and publishing, childcare and teaching assistants, literacy, ESOL, business administration and long courses in non-accredited learning.
- Teaching and learning have improved from satisfactory at the previous inspection to good, except in literacy and ESOL. Skilful and knowledgeable tutors provide lively and engaging learning activities. A few do not check learning sufficiently and planning is weak. Despite significant investment in information learning technology, not all tutors are confident at using it.
- Outstanding partnerships benefit learners. BAES works innovatively with an extensive and growing range of internal and external partners, including colleges and the voluntary sector. They share resources and expertise to extend the learning offer and support to meet the changing community development and employment needs of the citizens of Birmingham.

- BAES provides effective advice and guidance for learners at the start of their programmes. Support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is considerable. Financial and childcare support for those eligible on accredited learning is extensive. Learners do not receive systematic and sufficient advice and guidance for progression to further learning opportunities or employment.
- Arrangements to safeguard young learners and vulnerable adults are good. These include Criminal Records Bureau checks for all staff, thorough safeguarding training, useful guidance to staff and learners and a well promoted safeguarding hotline. Managers conduct appropriate risk assessments to protect learners including health and safety and e-safety.
- Promotion of equality and diversity is good. BAES is highly effective at equipping substantial numbers of disadvantaged learners with skills and qualifications to progress. In respect of age and gender across all funding streams, and for all ethnic groups in its adult safeguarded learning provision. Learners feel respected and are free from any bullying and harassment.
- The management structure of the service is complex. The roles and responsibilities are clear to the individual managers, they are less so to the largely dispersed part-time tutors and other managers. The lack of clear lines of authority and accountability creates tensions between some roles and hampers the service's ability to implement developments and improvements.
- Managers make appropriate use of available data to target, monitor and develop provision. However, delays in collecting accurate data hamper planning for improvement. Data on critical aspects of performance, such as learner retention, is incomplete and sometimes unreliable. Managers do not collate or systematically analyse data on learners' attendance.
- Elected representatives and senior managers have clarified the strategic vision and mission of the service. They provide appropriate supervision, support and challenge to managers. However, delays in decisions on acquiring and refurbishing accommodation, appointing staff and conducting vetting checks have had an adverse impact on learners.
- The service has strengthened its well-established process of observing teaching and learning by increasing substantially the observer team. However, observers place undue emphasis on auditing and evaluating teaching rather than learning. BAES does not provide sufficient support to improve tutors' grades from satisfactory to good. Most outstanding grades are over-generous.
- The service has made small-scale improvements to most of its main premises. However, the fabric of majority of the buildings is poor and the standard of accommodation, including the furniture, is low.

## What does Birmingham City Council need to do to improve further?

- Improve the provision in literacy and ESOL through management action that increases attendance and retention rates, raise the standard of teaching and learning and improve the structure of programmes.
- Continue to increase retention rates for learners on accredited and non-accredited programmes in all subject areas where these have declined and are below the national averages.
- Improve tutors' skills further to ensure that all teaching is consistently good through more widespread use of peer observations, coaching, mentoring and sharing of good practice. Ensure greater engagement of tutors in quality improvement including course reviews and the self-assessment process.
- Provide systematic information, advice and guidance on progression to all learners and use a system that accurately records non-accredited outcomes and learners destinations.
- Review and refocus management to ensure roles and responsibilities are clear and all staff have greater accountability for curriculum development, provision of learning and quality improvement.
- Improve the speed and timeliness of data collection and reports to ensure that the decisions, including those on attendance, retention and achievement of learners, support quality monitoring and quality improvement better.
- Improve the accuracy and effectiveness of monitoring and improving teaching and learning by reducing the observation team, simplifying the observation process, re-focussing it on learning, following up inadequate teaching more quickly and developing the skills of tutors graded satisfactory.
- Set and achieve a minimum standard of equipment, resources and refurbishment so that all learners receive learning in good quality accommodation across the service.
- Increase the speed and timeliness of decisions by the council to remove uncertainties and to ensure that the learners are not further disadvantaged through its policies and processes on recruitment of staff, property improvement, purchasing and checks on vetting learners.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- the convenient times and the location of classes in their neighbourhood
- high quality teaching
- the content and pace of learning
- friendly, supportive and helpful tutors
- one to one tutorials
- the positive learning relationships in classes
- wide range of courses

- learning languages and culture of various countries.

**What learners would like to see improved:**

- the availability of more classes and increased number of hours
- more timely feedback on possible grades with the guidance to improve further
- the large size of a few classes
- the slow pace of learning in a few lessons
- poor quality and excessive amount of photocopied handouts
- canteen facilities in the evenings in a few centres.

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

**What employers/stakeholders/partners like:**

- the bespoke language training courses at the Brasshouse Centre
- extremely helpful administration staff in all centres
- well prepared courses and the level of pre-planning
- the good impact of computer training courses on the employees facing redundancies
- courses that help employees become multi-skilled and more useful to the businesses
- good quality relationship between the trainers and the employees.

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

- more stability and continuity of the programmes that BAES offers.



## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 3**

9. Since the previous inspection, BAES has made many improvements to the provision. Teaching and learning has improved from satisfactory to good. Partnerships are now outstanding. The service remains consistently good at reaching out to the most disadvantaged groups, adding substantial value to their future prospects. Managers have set and met challenging targets for increasing the proportion of learner responsive provision. In view of the overall decline in success rates in 2009-10, the service has accurately and realistically down graded its capacity to make improvements from good at the previous inspection to satisfactory.
10. BAES has maintained grades in most subject areas but in literacy and ESOL it is inadequate. The provision in early years' childcare and teaching assistants achieved a lower grade than at the previous inspection. Retention rates are low in learner responsive provision in several subject areas.
11. The service makes effective use of learners' views to improve provision. Investment in an ambitious training programme for tutors and business support staff combined with the improvements in information technology has put the service on a solid footing. The teaching workforce is very stable and well experienced. The strategic management team functions well. Political representatives fully recognise the importance of the service in enriching the lives of Birmingham residents and provide adequate support and challenge. Decision making, however, on a few aspects, has been slow.
12. Quality improvement and self-assessment remain strong. The self-assessment report is very thorough, evaluative and succinct with sufficient detail and gives an accurate account of strengths and areas for improvement. Improvement plans for most subject areas have raised the standard of provision. Most learners continue to receive an effective educational experience and satisfactory value for their money.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 3**

13. Outcomes for learners on modern foreign languages, family learning and information communication technology are good. This is 50% of provision. Learners on programmes for childcare and teaching assistants achieve satisfactory outcomes. Success rates for the learners on Train to Gain are satisfactory. Overall pass rates on accredited literacy and ESOL courses are inadequate. This relates to 26% of the learner responsive and 15% of the total publicly funded contract.
14. On the majority of non-accredited programmes, 44% of all provision, learners successfully achieve their personal learning objectives. These include much

improved confidence, acquisition of a wide range of new skills, greater development of knowledge and understanding of their chosen topics and subjects.

15. Learners on employability programmes gain greater understanding of the employment market, develop new skills and learn to present themselves more professionally to potential employers. Train to Gain learners produce better quality work and demonstrate a higher degree of professionalism in their jobs.
16. Learners enjoy learning in safe and supportive environments. Learners' satisfaction levels have been consistently high for many years. Attendance rates are satisfactory overall.
17. All learners achieve equally regardless of their age, disability and gender. Achievement of those from Pakistani groups is considerably lower than other groups. Most of these learners are on literacy and ESOL programmes.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

18. Teaching and learning are good. Tutors are skilled and knowledgeable. They make good use of learners' experience and select materials that are relevant to their lives and interests. Most learners develop good skills, are enthusiastic about learning and make good contribution to classes. In most classes, tutors manage learning well using clear objectives to plan their sessions and a variety of teaching methods to meet learners' needs effectively. The best sessions are lively and interactive. Less successful teaching uses a narrow range of activities, unclear learning objectives and little or no planning to meet the range of learners' abilities and skills.
19. Learning plans are satisfactory. In the best individual learning plans, learners have clear targets which tutors monitor regularly. In a significant number of plans, however, the targets are too general and do not always help learners to understand what they need to do next to progress.
20. BAES has made a substantial investment in new information technology equipment and is providing training to improve staff skills. However, information and learning technology is not available in all classrooms and tutors do not always use it effectively. Tutors in all areas pay satisfactory attention to health, safety and safeguarding.
21. BAES has a good range of provision across the city to meet the needs of its residents. The Brasshouse Centre offers an outstanding range of provision in modern foreign languages. Tutors carefully design activities and classes and flexibly build capacity within communities, alongside meeting the council's priorities for improved quality of life and employment. All learners on accredited programmes undergo routine screening for literacy and numeracy. Learners in provision for childcare, teaching assistants and information and communication technology are able to develop literacy and numeracy at level 2 alongside their main qualification. The service is making sound progress to raise the profile and

take up of language, literacy and numeracy throughout its learner responsive provision. Programmes allow for progression from entry-level programmes to level 3. A minority of learners move on to higher levels of study or employment but BAES does not have sufficient data to monitor their progression.

22. Outstanding and continuously developing partnerships enable BAES to take an innovative and collaborative approach to the development of provision. BAES uses well-designed courses to meet individual, employer and community needs. The result from this is the wide-ranging work with schools, children's centres, employers, voluntary organisations, Jobcentre Plus and other providers.
23. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Well-qualified guidance staff provide appropriate support on most learners' programmes and good guidance at the end of family learning courses. However, the provision of guidance on progression is not systematic across most learners' programmes. Support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is considerable. This includes a comprehensive assessment service and a wide range of support including adaptive technology. Volunteers support a number of learners, particularly with literacy and numeracy needs. Childcare support for eligible learners on accredited course is good. It includes on-site crèche or payment for childcare from a list of carefully selected childcare providers. A high proportion of potential learners experiencing hardship receive financial support including course and examinations fees.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 3

24. Leaders and managers have continued to set high standards and raise expectations throughout the service to fulfil its mission. BAES has been successful at developing skills for employment in childcare, modern foreign languages, information communication technology, literacy, numeracy and ESOL. The senior management team works well to support managers and tutors. An ambitious training programme to develop the skills of part-time tutors has improved provision but its full impact is yet to be realised. BAES has a carefully designed programme of support training, monitoring, and guidance for volunteers. Most curriculum leadership and support for the tutors is good and improving. Leadership and management of work-based learning are satisfactory. The Train to Gain contract ended on 31 March 2011 and BAES has no plans to at present to offer apprenticeship.
25. Leaders and managers, including the elected representatives, set a clear strategic direction and vision for the service. They have continued to directly deliver education and training to complement existing services within schools and other providers. The service is working effectively to develop sustainability in all its programmes.
26. Equality and diversity is at the heart of the service. BAES has successfully located its provision in neighbourhoods of high deprivation to tackle disadvantage through developing skills and encouraging social mobility. The service has significantly improved learners' personal lives and, in family

learning, the prospects of future generations. BAES has increased the skills of council employees at risk of redundancy through computer training and improved capacity of some minority ethnic groups by providing initial teacher-training courses. The staff profile of the service reflects the learner population. Staff act as good role models and use their cultural knowledge and language skills to meet learners' needs. Most tutors promote equality and diversity in their lessons. The service has closed the achievement gap successfully for most groups.

27. BAES has appropriate arrangements to seek and respond to learners' views. The service acknowledges the need to use learners', employers' and other stakeholders' views in self-assessment.

## Learning for qualifications

**Other learning for qualifications provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: science and maths; retail and commercial enterprise, arts, media and publishing; history, philosophy and theology and Business, administration and law**

### Childcare and teaching assistants

**Grade 3**

#### Context

28. Non-accredited and accredited programmes are available in childcare and classroom work to 1,014 learners. Some 27% of learners are on non-accredited introductory programmes. Of those on accredited provision, 39% are on level 1 programmes, 40% are on level 2 and 21% are on level 3. Most learners are women over 19 years and 49% are from minority ethnic groups. A full time curriculum leader, three teaching and learning managers, four senior lecturers and 28 part-time tutors teach and manage the programmes.

#### Key findings

- Outcome for learners are satisfactory. Success rates for learners on level 3 programmes are high. Retention rates have been low but are now increasing on introductory and level 2 courses. A combination of long delays in securing clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau and inability to secure work placements has resulted in many learners leaving the programme.
- Learners make good progress in acquiring and developing a particularly effective range of work place and social skills, given their low levels of prior attainment and significant barriers to learning. Their social skills develop strongly and their self-confidence increases along with motivation and good work ethics. Learner progression into volunteering, to higher-level courses, higher education and employment is good.
- Teaching and learning are good. Well-qualified and experienced tutors plan their lessons in detail with clear aims and objectives. They make strong links between theory and practical work and use a good mix of activities to sustain learners' interest and motivation. Tutors make thorough and frequent checks on learning and provide learners useful feedback on their progress.
- Assessment is thorough and well planned. Staff keep detailed records. Learners' receive constructive oral and written feedback on assessment outcomes. They receive good support with portfolios and gathering evidence. Reviews of learners' progress are satisfactory. Targets are specific and measureable and provide sufficient challenge to all learners.
- The range of programmes is satisfactory. However, the entry criteria for progression from introductory programmes are not clear. The service expects learners to improve their literacy and/or numeracy alongside studying for their main vocational qualification within the minimum recommended guided learning hours. Most learners have found this difficult.

- Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Tutors provide sensitive support to learners to help them overcome social and personal barriers to learning. They are highly responsive to learners' needs and provide helpful guidance on opportunities for progression to higher levels of education and career pathways.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The childcare team is now fully functioning after some significant periods of staff absences. Support for tutors is effective. The tutor-training programme, along with the regular team-meetings to share good practice, motivates the tutors.
- The self-assessment report is accurate and the improvement plan is on target to raise standards of provision. Internal verification is effective at ensuring accurate assessment.
- The promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum is satisfactory. BAES attracts many learners with low levels of prior achievement. They raise their aspirations, enter professions that will improve their social mobility and improve the attainment levels of their children. Support for learners to achieve their main and literacy and/or numeracy qualifications is improving.

#### **What does Birmingham City Council need to do to improve further?**

- Continue to improve retention rates by motivating learners through setting clear entry criteria for joining the programmes, removing delays to the Criminal Records Bureau checks on learners and speeding up the process for securing placement.
- Review the structure of the programmes to allow adequate time including increasing the guided learning hours and support for the development of literacy and/ or numeracy skills alongside the main programme.

## Information and communication technology for users

## Grade 2

### Context

29. BAES offers both accredited and non-accredited programmes in information and communication technology at 47 venues across the city. Some 2,130 learners have enrolled on part-time courses from entry-level to level 3. Some 65% of learners are women and 55% are from minority ethnic groups. A full-time curriculum leader, five part-time teaching and learning managers, two part-time senior lecturers and 50 part-time tutors teach and manage the programme.

### Key findings

- Overall rates of achievement of qualifications are above national averages. Success rates for learners on qualification-based courses are above average for all learners including for the four largest minority ethnic groups. Success rates for learners on non-accredited learning are high. All groups of learners achieve their qualifications equally.
- The majority of learners make good progress. Most have increased their confidence in using computers by using social network sites and shopping on the internet. Learners design and produce high standards of work, particularly when they link the tasks to their hobbies and personal interests. Most learners are keen to continue their studies and progress on to the next level.
- Learners feel safe. They learn about safe working practices in and outside of class including adopting correct seating posture; taking regular breaks and purchasing appropriate equipment for their workstations at home. Learners demonstrate good knowledge of internet safety. Managers have conducted effective risk assessments of all computer rooms. Tutors reinforce health and safety through lessons.
- Learners' contribution to their communities and families is good. Older learners interact more effectively with younger family members through a shared interest and knowledge of computers. Others use their skills to help local communities including churches and residents' associations.
- The majority of teaching and learning is good. Generally, lessons are well-planned with good pace and timing. Learners develop independent learning skills and take responsibility for their own learning. Tutors do not identify and plan sufficiently for the individual learning needs of a minority of learners who are capable of making faster progress.
- Useful materials help learners to prepare for unit assessments. Tutors mark learners' work carefully. They offer learners useful hints and tips to improve their work. However, tutors do not set short-term unit targets for learners to measure and assess their own progress.
- The range of provision is good and improving to meet the needs and interests of learners. The service establishes computer classes quickly to attract learners who are new to learning. The range of courses is broad and learners can

progress from non-accredited classes to level 3 qualifications in all areas of the city.

- The service has very well developed partnerships to widen participation in the city. Its links with schools, organisations that support individuals into work and children's centres contribute effectively in developing local communities. BAES provides well co-ordinated family and community based information and communication technology courses. Learners make good use of blogs and podcasts that effectively promote social inclusion.
- Support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Learners use a range of adaptive technology such as height adjustable tables and adaptive keyboards effectively. Tutors provide good advice on how learners can continue their learning with many progressing on to higher qualifications. Tutors provide appropriate literacy and language support to learners to help them complete their qualifications.
- Leadership and management of the provision are good and have been particularly effective in reversing declining success rates on courses to improve computer literacy skills. Managers have set and met challenging targets. Tutors receive highly valued professional support from their managers. The self-assessment report is accurate. Computer resources are good in the main centres but in a few community venues, they are poor.

#### **What does Birmingham City Council need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that the tutors take more account of learners' starting points and learning styles to plan teaching that meets the needs of the more able learners.
- Improve learners' engagement in setting their own short-term targets and monitoring their progress by developing their evaluating skills.
- Improve learning resources in a few community venues by ensuring adequate investment and refurbishment.



## Modern foreign languages

## Grade 2

### Context

30. BAES offers 28 European, community and world languages including British Sign Language (BSL) at various levels. Some 6,139 learners are on courses across the city. Around 85% learners are on accredited programmes and 13% on privately funded English as a Foreign Language Courses. The Brasshouse Centre is the main venue for languages. The service offers classes in other parts of the city. A full-time curriculum manager, five full and part-time teaching and learning managers, seven senior lecturers and 147 part-time tutors teach and manage the provision.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for all learners on modern foreign languages and BSL are good and remain above national averages. Retention rates have improved to good levels. Learners' achievement of personal objectives on non-accredited classes is also good. The service has successfully closed the achievement gap for 16 to 18 year old learners and those from minority ethnic groups.
- Learners' work is good. Most improve their confidence and achieve a good level of fluency and accuracy. They are highly motivated and practise their language skills regularly. Learners acquire considerable cultural knowledge and use their language skills well on holidays or with families living abroad. Learners progress well through various levels.
- Learners substantially improve their economic and social well-being. For a minority of learners, studying a language has significantly changed their lives. Most learners use their new language skills at work, for example in schools, in hospitals or as public transport workers. Others improve their employability and career prospects. Older learners report significant improvement to their mental health.
- Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, tutors plan very well, make considerable use of interactive white board and challenge the more able learners through extension activities. Learners improve their speaking skills and pronunciation through interactive activities. However, in a substantial number of lessons, tutors do not allow learners to interact sufficiently and practise free speaking.
- Feedback on work done in and out of the classroom is effective and timely. Although most learners evaluate and record their progress weekly, termly progress reviews on most courses are not always timely and effective in setting new individual goals with learners.
- The range and levels of languages is exceptional. The Brasshouse Centre is the regional hub for languages and accounts for 17% of languages provision in adult education nationally. The service offers accredited and non-accredited courses in 28 languages including BSL at various times of the day, evenings and on Saturdays. A high number of learners also attend very well planned enrichment activities including e-learning.

- Partnership working is outstanding. Partners, including employers, are excellent at promoting cultural cohesion and language learning in a wide range of contexts. For example, BAES provides classes for schoolteachers in the workplace. The sign language programme provides excellent access to the local Deaf community. BAES is the major local provider of language learning for young people.
- Advice and support for learners is good. Tutors offer support to catch up with missed work for learners who are unable to attend. Learners with additional learning needs benefit from good support and achieve well. The service runs free tasters and introductory courses to enable learners to enrol on the correct course and at an appropriate level.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The service plans the provision with an excellent understanding of local and national trends and the challenges. Operational management is excellent. Managers support tutors extremely well through professional development and sharing of good practice. Managers make good use of data to increase participation, monitor attendance and retention and reduce the achievement gap.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. During lessons, learners explore various cultural aspects; discuss stereotypes and topical issues such as gay weddings. The vast majority of tutors have first-hand experience of education, life and language of the subjects they teach. They provide excellent cultural input to raise learners' awareness of similarities and differences within their various cultures.
- Quality improvement is excellent. Self-assessment is comprehensive. It uses a broad range of evidence from informative course reviews, data and the views of learners and tutors. The self-assessment report is highly accurate. Although the observation of teaching and learning is extremely thorough, a few grades are over-generous and observers do not sufficiently focus on learning.

### **What does Birmingham City Council need to do to improve further?**

- Promote greater learner activities and interaction in the less than good lessons through better sharing of good practice including through more peer observations.
- Develop evaluative skills of learners to review their progress and help them to set and review their individual learning goals each term to make greater progress.
- Improve the accuracy of grading by observers by focussing more closely on learning activities and skills development.

## Literacy and ESOL

## Grade 4

### Context

31. BAES provides courses from entry to level 2 in literacy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Courses are part-time and most are accredited. Over the last three years learner numbers have doubled on literacy programmes at level 1 and 2 and at entry level ESOL. Some 1,855 and 1,312 learners are on literacy and ESOL programmes respectively. Women make up 76% of learners, 80% are from minority ethnic groups and 4% are aged 16 to 18. Some 124 tutors teach on the programmes.

### Key findings

- Overall pass rates on accredited literacy and ESOL courses are inadequate although outstanding for a small proportion of learners on entry-level literacy courses. The pass rates for the majority of learners on level 1 and level 2 in literacy and at entry level ESOL certificate are well below the national averages. Retention data for literacy and ESOL is not reliable.
- Retention rates are poor for most learners. Learners enrol on courses at any time during the year. A high number enrol but do not attend and some 10% do not take examinations.
- Targets in learners' individual learning plans are of poor quality. These do not identify specific and measurable outcomes for the development of literacy skills. The targets do not provide sufficient stretch and challenge to ensure that learners make sufficient progress.
- Most learners develop adequate levels of confidence and skills. They participate appropriately in community projects and visits. Learners develop and use effectively speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. They use these skills in their daily lives including supporting family life and their children with schoolwork. Most learners seek to improve employment opportunities. They feel safe in centres.
- Too much teaching and learning is inadequate. Limited learning activities, ineffective use of information learning technology and poor planning for individual learning needs are features of too many lessons. Learning objectives are usually a list of activities. In the better lessons, tutors plan their lessons well with activities that improve the interaction between learners and increase their motivation.
- The range, levels, flexibility, accessibility and locations of the courses are good at meeting the learners' personal, training and work aspirations. The service provides programmes in a wide range of community venues that attract hard-to-reach learners. However, the number of ESOL learners has declined by 67% in the previous three years.
- Partnerships with a variety of organisations including schools, community centres, the probation service and the voluntary sector are highly effective.

- Tutors provide appropriate level of support including referral, information; advice and guidance, childcare and financial help with examination fees. Learners value the support highly.
- Leadership and management of the subject area are inadequate. This area has achieved growth at the cost of quality. Roles and responsibilities including accountabilities and authority in the management structure lack clarity. Managers have not identified and successfully dealt with critical issues such as inadequate teaching and low pass rates of learners.
- The service has accelerated the provision of regular and structured professional development and training including sharing of good practice. The tutors appreciate highly the recent improvements in staff development. However, the full impact of these measures is not yet evident.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Tutors and learners recognise and respect cultural diversity. Timetables allow space for celebration of religious festivals. Equality, diversity, and safeguarding are not systematically included within the curriculum planning.
- The self-assessment report has accurately identified the provision's weaknesses. Both managers and tutors are highly committed to improving the provision. Tutors are well aware of the quality improvement processes. They do not use standardised lesson plans.
- Accommodation, resources and equipment are satisfactory. However, in a minority of centres, rooms are too small, resources are insufficient and information learning technology is limited.

### **What does Birmingham City Council need to do to improve further?**

- Implement strategies to ensure that pass rates for all learners are well above the national averages by systematically investigating the reasons for this and taking appropriate action to deal with high levels of non-attendance at examinations, the timely processing of withdrawals restructuring the programmes to provide sufficient tuition to all learners.
- Ensure that all tutors work effectively with learners to set consistently challenging individual targets and clearly record learners' progress during reviews that provide a comprehensive record of learning and achievement.
- Improve the weaker teaching and learning by ensuring tutors develop learning which engages all learners through ensuring activities are relevant to personal, social and work related themes, and by reducing the reliance on tutor led activities.
- Ensure that all learning centres have a minimum level of equipment and train and support tutors in making effective use of information learning technologies to make lessons fun and more effective.
- Improve leadership and management of the subject area by ensuring that management roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clear to all staff, data is accurate and its collection is timely and plan actions to improve the main causes of poor pass rates.

## Learning for social and personal development

**Other social and personal development learning provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: agriculture/horticulture; retail and commercial; leisure, travel and tourism; arts, media and publishing.**

### Family learning

### Grade 2

#### Context

32. Currently 175 parents and carers are on 24 wider family learning (WFL) courses and a further 143 are on 19 family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) courses across Birmingham. The programmes vary from short 10-hour courses to 72-hour intensive FLLN provision. Some 66% of the learners are new to learning and 82% live in areas of high deprivation. Some 63% are from minority ethnic groups and 12% are male. In 2009/10, 863 learners took part in WFL courses and 1,690 learners joined FLLN courses.

#### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. They attend regularly, make good progress and increase their levels of literacy, numeracy and language significantly. A substantial majority progress to other courses, volunteer work or employment. Some 32% of learners on FLLN courses achieve literacy or numeracy qualifications at foundation or intermediate level. Portfolios for accredited provision in WFL are of a good standard.
- Learners enjoy learning and significantly develop their confidence, knowledge, and skills. Learners increase their understanding of how children learn and enjoy supporting their children with play and homework. This develops family relationships to help improve children's behaviour and progress at school. Learners feel very safe, and benefit from social contact with parents from different minority groups. This helps improve community cohesion.
- Teaching and learning are good. Well-experienced and qualified tutors use interesting, enjoyable and imaginative activities to engage learners. They plan their lessons very well, linking them closely to the school curriculum and the embedding of language, literacy and numeracy skills. However, a minority of tutors provide too long an explanation of topics, ask closed questions and do not allow learners sufficient time to practise and develop their skills.
- The monitoring of learners' progress and achievement is mostly good. However, initial assessment and the setting of learners' personal targets is underdeveloped. Tutors do not always clearly record, the learners' starting points in sufficient detail. Learners find it difficult to monitor their own progress. Individual learning plans often contain group targets, regardless of individual need or interest.
- The service plans the curriculum very well to enrich learning. Most courses include a substantial number of external visits to local libraries, bookshops, interesting community venues as well as historical sites and museums. This

helps promote learning well, provides a high degree of social and cultural awareness and helps parents strengthen their relationships with their children.

- The service is highly effective at meeting the needs and interest of the learners. Learners with previously poor educational experiences or limited experience of education in the United Kingdom engage enthusiastically into learning. Specialist tutors from creative arts, drama and health enrich the curriculum offer. Learners enjoy a wide range of free local activities during the school holidays.
- Partnerships with nursery, primary and secondary schools and children's centres are outstanding. The excellent benefits include precise targeting of learners in designated wards; developing high quality, customised training, particularly effective resource management and joint planning and marketing. Schools value family learning; particularly the greater participation in school affairs by parents and the improved performance of their children.
- Support for learners is good. Each course has a budget to provide additional support which best meets the needs of particular groups of learners. This includes stationery and equipment for families including dictionaries, calculators for adult learners and provision of financial support for visits, children's and adults' storybooks.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The service has developed an excellent strategy to engage disadvantaged groups into learning to shape the future for themselves and their children. Excellent communications with the provider partners ensures a consistent, good quality provision across Birmingham. Managers support partners further through detailed guidance and obligatory, thorough staff training.
- Quality improvement is thorough, developmental and supportive. Tutors review and improve each course making particularly good use of learners' and partners' feedback. Self-assessment is accurate. The service does not use data sufficiently to identify trends and track learners' outcomes and progression. The observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory but observers do not focus sufficiently on learning.
- The service has an excellent record of attracting learners from targeted wards and communities within Birmingham but the percentage of male learners has not increased.

### **What does Birmingham City Council need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the quality of target setting and processes to set and record in detail individual targets, ensuring learners develop high-level evaluative skills to measure their progress.
- Provide greater focus on learning in the observation of teaching and learning to ensure improvement in staff skills in planning learning for individual learners alongside group aims and developing greater learner independence in undertaking learning activities.
- Increase the systematic monitoring and analysis of learners' progression and destinations to identify and further improve rates of progression.

- Develop strategies to increase participation by male learners by adapting the curriculum offer, adjusting times of learning and the choice of venues.

## Information about the inspection

33. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Birmingham City Council's head of curriculum and quality 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 local Skills Funding Agency or other funding bodies, 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.
34. Inspectors used group, individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners and employers. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of the local authority. They also visited learning sessions, assessments or progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers including various employability projects and work-based learning.



**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Birmingham City 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 <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive	Social and personal development
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>					
Full-time learners	0	0	0	0	0
Part-time learners	18,562	528	9,927	124	8,107
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>3</b>				
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3				
How well do learners attain their learning goals? How well do learners progress?	3 3				
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>	2				
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
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?	3				
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3				
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?	3				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3				

\*

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