London Borough of Brent
Inspection report

Unique reference number:	53106
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Type of provider:	Local authority
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Information about the provider

1. Brent Adult and Community Learning Service (BACES) provides adult education for the London Borough of Brent. BACES is located within the council's directorate of children and families. The mission of the service is to broaden minds, create opportunities and change the lives of individuals and communities.

2. BACES provides courses in three main council-owned venues, one leased venue and sixty other venues including secondary schools and children's centres. The main centres are situated within the council's designated priority neighbourhoods of South Kilburn, Harlesden, Stonebridge, Church End and St Raphael. These wards are within the 10% most deprived in the country. Some 17% of the population in Brent lives in these priority neighbourhoods and 66% of BACES learners are on benefits.

3. The service provides its learning under contract to the Skills Funding Agency. The head and deputy head of the service, assisted by three heads of curriculum, provide leadership for Skills for Life provision; informal and adult community learning; and, employability, training and vocational qualifications. In English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), literacy and numeracy, 99% of the learners are taking accredited programmes. Over 80% of the courses are at foundation level and are externally accredited. Most of the intermediate level courses are focused on improving employability and are concentrated within childcare, information and communication technology (ICT), GCSE English and mathematics and business administration. Over the past three years, the number of learners on accredited long courses has declined, with a corresponding increase of learners on short courses. Approximately 78% of enrolments are from minority ethnic groups.

4. According to the Greater London Authority the population of Brent is 289,000. It has become the second most ethnically diverse borough in the country, with 55% of residents belonging to a minority ethnic group. Refugees and asylum seekers make up an estimated 5% of the borough's population. Brent has a borough-wide unemployment rate of 9%, which is around the national rate.

Type of provision	Number of learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: Further Education (16 to 18)	36 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Learning for Qualifications Learning for Social and Personal development	2,669 part-time learners 2,732 part-time learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2

Capacity to improve	Grade 2

	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	2

Learning for qualifications	Grade
Health, public services and care	2
Literacy and numeracy	3
English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)	2

Learning for social and personal development	Grade
Arts, media and publishing	3
Community development	2

Overall effectiveness

5. Brent Adult and Community Education Service (BACES/the service) makes a significant contribution to improving the life chances of residents from some of the most deprived wards of the borough. Outcomes for learners are good including achievement of valuable accredited qualifications. Learners enjoy learning immensely, gain self-confidence and develop good levels of skills to become active citizens. Most learners now stay on their programmes and make good progress. They have developed a strong appetite for learning, raising aspirations for themselves and their families. Many progress from the literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses into childcare, business administration and computing where they learn useful vocational skills to improve their employment prospects. Learners feel safe in local venues.

6. The service has made significant improvements to the design and structure of courses to meet the needs of learners and employers. Most learning venues are conveniently located across the borough. The service has highly productive partnerships with a wide range of other organisations which benefit learners significantly. Teaching, training and assessment are good. Dyslexia and pastoral support for learners are very good. Information, advice and guidance about courses are satisfactory.

7. Elected representatives and senior officers of the council have set a very clear direction for the service. Leaders and managers run the service well for the benefit of their learners. Staff are very well qualified and experienced. The service makes satisfactory arrangements to keep learners safe. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. BACES has been successful at narrowing any gaps between the achievements of different groups of learners. The service knows its provision well and uses learners' and partners' views well to develop and improve the provision. The management of the service's performance, including the observation of teaching and learning, is satisfactory. The inspectors judged the teaching and learning to be good; however, they did not find the levels of outstanding teaching claimed by the service. BACES provides good value for money and demonstrates good capacity to maintain and improve the service.

Main findings

■ Outcomes for learners are good. Achievement rates for qualifications in ESOL and childcare are high, but they are satisfactory in literacy, numeracy and business administration. Retention rates are high. Current learners are making good progress. Outcomes for learners on non-accredited courses, mainly in arts and crafts, are also satisfactory. Many individual learning plans are not sufficiently well focused on how learners can improve and learning targets are not specific enough.

■ Learners improve their economic and social well-being to a good level. Closely-targeted provision attracts disadvantaged groups and has had a substantial impact on their health, social life and employment prospects. Learners thoroughly enjoy their classes. They speak highly of the wide range of personal benefits from learning, such as improved confidence and the acquisition of new skills, knowledge and understanding.

■ Teaching and learning are good and assessment is satisfactory. Most tutors plan their lessons well, using broad-ranging, stimulating and exciting strategies to engage learners' interest. Tutors do not make sufficient use of the learning support assistants and information and learning technology (ILT) to ensure faster progress for all learners.

■ The range of provision is good at meeting the needs and interests of learners and employers. The service is highly responsive to the needs of its community and provides an appropriate range of provision in many subject areas. However, many learners want to study at a higher level; the service has not enabled such provision in conjunction with other providers.

- The service works very well with an extensive range of partners. It makes an excellent contribution to both local and regional priorities by targeting the provision at priority groups. Partners from the voluntary sector, employers and other local and national services work very effectively to research local needs, and share resources and expertise to benefit the residents of Brent.

- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Staff provide high-quality classroom and pastoral support promptly to help learners overcome any barriers. High-quality dyslexia support helps learners make excellent progress. Information and advice at course level are satisfactory; however, the advice about next steps in learning and for learners with overseas qualifications is too variable.

- Curriculum managers organise learner responsive provision effectively, while management of arts, media and publishing courses is satisfactory. They provide good quality resources and use data well to set targets for improving achievement. Tutors take satisfactory steps to recognise and record the prior achievement of learners. The service provides good support for staff development and managers manage staff performance well.

- Senior leaders and managers have a strong ambition and clear vision for the service. They have closely aligned the provision to identified priorities relating to the needs of local residents. They set demanding targets and monitor performance closely. The provision is well planned. Resources are generally good. However, the availability of information technology is insufficient in a few centres.

- Governance is strong. The borough's senior officers and elected representatives provide good challenge and support to managers of the service. The borough council fully recognises the generous benefits of adult community learning and strongly supports the service. Managers' strategic planning and financial management are sound. Performance measures to ensure the service is providing good value for money are working well.

- The service takes satisfactory steps to ensure learners are safe. BACES has good knowledge of its most vulnerable learners and prioritises their well-being. All staff have been subject to appropriate checks, including Criminal Records Bureau checks. All learners feel safe and work safely in lessons. However, the process for, and quality of, health and safety risk assessments are not thorough enough.

- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. High numbers of learners from diverse cultures and groups take part in learning programmes and achieve good outcomes. The service has been particularly effective in attracting learners who have low levels of education and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. BACES celebrates diversity well, although there are no facilities for prayer and reflection.

- Quality improvement arrangements have improved from satisfactory at the last inspection to good. Outcomes for learners are good and the quality of teaching and learning has improved to good. However, the grades for teaching and learning in the self-assessment report are over generous. The observers do not focus sufficiently on the planning of lessons and the learners' progress.

What does the London Borough of Brent need to do to improve further?

- Improve retention and success rates for all learners by: targeting support for identified learners to ensure that they make at least the progress expected of them; and, monitoring learners' progress against challenging targets in individual learning plans.

- Enhance tutors' skills further to ensure that all teaching is consistently good or better through more widespread use of peer observations, coaching, mentoring and the sharing of good practice. Focus the observations of teaching and learning on the use of learning support assistants, the clarity of learning objectives and measuring the learners' progress.

- Increase the opportunities for learners' progression to other courses by joint working with other providers, where possible locating provision within the BACES centres, to ensure that all learners can join suitable programmes.

- Improve the quality of support for learners in their next steps in learning by offering systematic information, advice and guidance to all learners, particularly for learners with overseas qualifications.

- Increase learners' access to quiet areas for prayer and reflection within the main centres by identifying the availability of suitable space at different times of the day.

- Raise the standard of the quality of health and safety risk assessments by ensuring that all venues have regular well-documented assessments and ensuring that tutors identify and document risks associated with lesson activities, and these are included well in lesson planning.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors
What learners like:

- the highly professional tutors who provide good individual help and support

- the friendly café where learners can bring their own food

- developing the new skills such as using their home computers for the first time to send emails, letters and prepare professional curriculum vitae

- using their learning to help integrate their children into school

- good access for wheelchairs

- the good range of affordable courses

- the easily accessible, safe and welcoming venues.

What learners would like to see improved:

- larger rooms for a few classes

- better information and guidance on what courses to do next

- the handouts that are sometimes hard to read

- access to computers in classes and at centres for independent learning
- the amount of information about the additional support available.

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

What stakeholders/partners like:

- the flexibility and the speed of response to meet their needs
- the 'can-do' attitude of the staff
- the true partnership approach through which the service and partners help each others' objectives.

What stakeholders/partners would like to see improved:

- communications, particularly about the progress of the learners into employment or further learning.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement   Grade 2

8. BACES has improved all aspects of its provision from satisfactory to good. Changes made to the structure of the service are having a beneficial effect and much improved quality assurance arrangements have raised outcomes for learners and standards of teaching. The service has responded very well to a 'notice to improve' from the funding body regarding success on long courses. Managers took swift action to restructure the courses and have improved retention rates. In the current year, retention on these courses is high.

9. The self-assessment process is inclusive and uses a broad range of evidence such as data, impact assessments and learners' and partners' views to arrive at a broadly accurate account of the provision. Whilst inspectors agreed with the aspect grades, they awarded lower grades for literacy and numeracy and arts, media and publishing than claimed in the self-assessment report.

Outcomes for learners   Grade 2

10. Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates for qualifications are good for ESOL, which has the largest number of learners, and for well-subscribed courses in health, public services and care. This is a significant achievement as many learners have very low starting points. Success rates are satisfactory in ICT but low in business administration, literacy and numeracy. Retention rates are high in all subject areas, particularly for learner responsive provision. In the previous two years, many learners did not complete courses and this affected the success rates. Attendance rates are satisfactory.

11. On the majority of the non-accredited programmes, learners successfully achieve their personal learning objectives except in arts, media and publishing where this achievement is satisfactory. Benefits to learners include much improved confidence, acquisition of a wide range of new skills and greater development of knowledge and understanding of the chosen topics and subjects.

12. Learners make good use of their newly-developed skills to benefit themselves and their community. ESOL learners use their improved language skills to become active citizens of the community, relying less on public services such as interpreters. Literacy and numeracy learners participate in life more fully, seeking jobs and helping themselves and their children. Family learning participants become more confident, and develop their reading skills as well as their parenting skills. Short courses in first aid, food hygiene and flower arranging develop learners' confidence, so that learners progress to further vocational courses at higher levels. BACES has developed the skills levels of its residents sufficiently so that they can begin to compete equally in the labour market. Their prospects improve as many gain employment, secure better-paid jobs, or become self-employed.

The quality of provision   Grade 2

13. The service provides a high standard of teaching, learning and assessment in
    most subject areas. The majority of tutors are well qualified and have extensive
    specialist skills and knowledge. They provide a very broad perspective and
    stimulus to develop learners' skills and knowledge and to motivate and inspire
    learners. Most plan their lessons well with a wide range of activities to interest
    learners. In ESOL, community development and in health, public services and
    care, most tutors keep their lessons moving at a challenging pace. Much of the
    teaching in arts, media and publishing and literacy and numeracy is satisfactory.
    In these sessions, tutors do not have suffciently clear lesson objectives and do
    not use a sufficiently wide range of learning resources, including information
    and learning technology (ILT). Tutors make satisfactory use of questioning to
    check learning and provide satisfactory feedback to learners to help them
    improve further. In-class support from the support assistants is satisfactory;
    however, tutors do not make the best use of the support staff to benefit all
    learners.

14. Provision is good at meeting the needs and interests of learners, communities
    and employers. In response to Jobcentre Plus, the service has established
    employability programmes. The provision is extensive and is available on a
    flexible basis at different times of the day, in the evenings and at weekends in
    many venues across the borough. The service carries out effective research and
    runs many taster courses and other bespoke courses at the request of learners
    and community groups. A significant proportion of provision is for high priority
    community groups and many learners progress from these courses to further
    accredited learning. In previous years, retention rates on accredited courses
    have been low owing to the programme structure. Learners were often not able
    to commit to a few hours learning per week for a whole year. Now learners
    attend for a greater number of hours and focus on what they need to learn first,
    and this change has improved retention rates.

15. The service's partnerships with voluntary groups, libraries, employers and
    Jobcentre Plus are highly productive. Partners work well to improve the quality
    of life for the residents of the borough. The service is making a positive
    contribution to improving the capacity of the local voluntary community sector
    through its non-accredited courses. The service is well represented in many
    local forums and provides learning and support services in response to local
    employment needs. Its work in South Kilburn and St Raphael ward is making a
    significant difference to the lives of residents, many of whom wish to study in
    local venues. However, the service has not facilitated provision from other
    providers which would extend opportunities for learners to progress in their
    studies.

16. Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Tutors provide good
    subject-specific and individual support to learners. Dyslexia support is excellent.
    Staff provide effective initial assessment of learners' skills and support needs,
    which is used well by tutors on most courses to plan their learning activities.

The service has not established a clear policy on the development of individual learning plans (ILPs). Some courses have such plans and others do not. For example, in arts, media and publishing, for those learners progressing to courses at higher levels, tutors do not fully consider the learners' previous learning. Where ILPs exist, the quality is variable. They are good in ICT with learning objectives that have specific and time-bound targets. Staff provide good initial, advice and information about their existing programmes. Many of the learners have qualifications from their countries of origin and have high aspirations. The service has not taken adequate steps to help them determine the comparative value of their qualifications.

Leadership and management   Grade 2

17. Strategic and operational management are good. BACES has strong ambition for its programmes through well-defined strategies and plans. The senior managers and leaders have set a clear direction for the service which is leading to improvements. They provide good support and challenge to the service by setting demanding targets to promote and improve the provision. Managers and staff now use data very well to plan, provide and monitor the programmes. Resources to support learning are good. However, in a few classes, learner numbers are too large for the size of the room, and some venues do not provide learners with sufficient access to ICT.

18. Senior council leaders and managers provide strong governance, comprising of sound strategic advice, guidance and challenge to the service. A recent whole service review has had a very positive effect in defining the role, direction and management structure for BACES. The service is in a strong position to meet the future priorities and challenges of the local authority.

19. The service has satisfactory arrangements to keep learners safe. Managers ensure that all venues used for learning are assessed for health and safety compliance. Tutors promote safety well in lessons, but not all lesson plans adequately record risks associated with lesson activities.

20. BACES promotes equality and diversity well. The provision is clearly targeted at the priority groups of disadvantaged learners that the service wishes to support. BACES works particularly well with these community groups, often offering a range of services and support to prepare them for learning. In 2010/11, over half of the learners were from minority ethnic groups with English language needs; the majority were workless, whilst a significant proportion had low educational achievement and a learning difficulty and/or disability. Tutors promote equality and diversity well within lessons. BACES has produced a very useful guidance document entitled 'How diverse and equal are you?' which tutors use to reflect diversity in lesson planning and in all their daily practice. The service is respectful and understands the needs of its diverse community well. However, the areas assigned for prayer and reflection are not adequately identified or communicated to learners.

21. Quality assurance and improvement arrangements effectively enhance the provision. Managers make frequent visits to the classes held at the partners' venues to ensure that learners are receiving good-quality learning experiences. Managers have improved the observation of teaching and learning process since the last inspection, and this is leading to improved teaching and learning and wider programme improvements. However, inspectors judged that observation grades were over generous. BACES undertakes good analysis of its programmes through learners' feedback to promote improvements. The service includes all staff and learners in its self-assessment process; however, partner organisations were not given the opportunity to comment. Managers plan thoroughly, using evidence such as self-assessment findings, and focus developments on identified priority areas. They clearly identify areas for improvement, and plan monitoring and management arrangements with clear timescales.

22. Financial planning and stability are given a high priority. BACES strictly follows the sustainable development policy of the borough council. The service receives little funding from fees owing to the deprivation levels of the borough's residents. Managers allocate the available resources well to ensure that the learners continue to achieve good outcomes, leading to good value for money.

Other learning for qualifications provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: information communication technology, sports and recreation, business administration and law.

Health, public services and care   Grade 2

Context

23. During the inspection week, 117 women learners were studying childcare programmes including a foundation award in caring for young children and an intermediate certificate for the children and young people's workforce. A further 27 adult learners, most of whom are female, are taking courses leading to an intermediate award in initial counselling and an intermediate certificate in counselling skills. Most learners have progressed from ESOL courses. Courses are run from three of the centre's main sites and two outlying children's centres and are offered with a choice of days and times.

Key findings

■   Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are satisfactory and improving. In 2010/11, success rates were above national averages on the most significant courses. Most learners complete their courses. Learners enjoy their learning immensely and make good progress for the level and stage of their course. Attendance has improved considerably but punctuality is poor in a minority of lessons.

■   Learners improve their employment prospects through gaining good subject knowledge and practical skills during the course and work experience placements. They often undertake additional voluntary work experience over and above the mandatory requirements of the qualification and this sometimes leads directly to employment. Many learners are developing and using social and life skills, for example improved parenting skills.

■   Learners develop a satisfactory level of communication skills, including speaking and listening skills, in supportive learning environments. Their written skills are not as good. Tutors do not sufficiently stress the importance of correct spelling and grammar for writing notes and reports for work. ICT skills are often not well developed.

■   Learners feel very safe in all the centres and learn safe working practices. They develop skills and knowledge that help them to improve their own health and lifestyle. Learners make good contributions to their community through voluntary work and fundraising activities. Improved interpersonal skills help them strengthen their bonds with friends, family and colleagues.

■   Teaching, training and assessment are good. Learners receive prompt and constructive feedback on their work, which helps them to improve. Teachers develop learners' understanding of key terms and concepts through clear

explanations, a range of interesting activities and linking theory to practice well. However, in a few lessons, their questioning does not challenge and ensure the full participation of all learners.

- The range of provision is good. Courses run at convenient times to accommodate learners' job or family commitments. Learners with ESOL needs are well supported in classes through specifically-tailored courses. Many learners would like to continue learning at the local centres. The service has not worked with partner organisations to offer progression routes.

- BACES has productive partnerships with a number of local agencies such as a housing association, Genesis, to recruit both male and female learners. Children's centres provide safe learning venues and valuable childcare facilities to enable learners to study.

- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Tutors provide very effective additional learning support in and out of classes. However, it is not specifically focused on the learners' personal learning targets. Many targets on individual learning plans are often not specific or challenging enough to accelerate learners' progress.

- Leadership and management are good. Managers have put robust measures in place and improved retention and attendance significantly. Staff development is good as are the arrangements to keep learners safe. Classroom facilities and resources are adequate. However, childcare learners do not have sufficient practical resources to develop their skills in a realistic work environment. Access to computers and library services is limited.

- Tutors promote equality and diversity well. The responsive provision enables attendance by female learners from some hard-to-reach minority ethnic groups. Learners from minority ethnic groups and those declaring a learning difficulty achieve equally. Classes foster an inclusive and mutually respectful atmosphere.

What does the London Borough of Brent need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve success rates, and enable learners to make faster progress, through improved setting of specific and challenging targets on learners' individual learning plans, and effective monitoring of progress.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning through: developing staff expertise in questioning techniques; providing greater challenge to learners; improving the use of ICT in classes; and focusing on the correction of grammar and spelling, to ensure that all learners develop a better standard of written English.

- Develop appropriate resources for childcare, which allow learners to practise their skills in a more realistic work environment.

Literacy and numeracy   Grade 3

Context

24. BACES provides accredited learning programmes in literacy and numeracy from pre-entry to level 2. During the inspection, 741 learners were studying in this subject area; 49% of enrolments were in numeracy. Some 75% of learners are women. All courses are part time and run from four main centres and eight outreach centres during the day time, twilight and in the evenings. Some 211 learners are following a portfolio-based entry-level programme that enables them to choose from a range of options.

Key findings

■   Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Although success rates have improved, they remain well below national averages, owing to low retention rates in previous years. Retention rates have improved significantly to above 90%. Current learners are making good progress relative to their low starting points. Some 86% of learners are due to achieve units of qualifications.

■   Learners' confidence, motivation and self-esteem improve significantly as learners participate enthusiastically in learning. With improved literacy and numeracy skills, learners feel more confident to secure employment. They use these skills well in their daily lives, dealing successfully with bills and formal letters. Many parents are now able to help their children with reading and numeracy skills.

■   Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In good lessons, the pace of learning is brisk and tutors use a variety of teaching methods to interest learners fully. In satisfactory lessons, tutors use a narrow range of teaching methods and do not make sufficient use of real-life learning materials, including information and learning technology (ILT), often relying too much on worksheets.

■   Tutors employ a robust initial assessment effectively to identify learners' existing skill levels in reading, writing and numeracy. They use these findings to set challenging whole-group and individual learning targets and to provide support. Tutors review learners' progress routinely. Although most learners are well aware of their current progress and achievements, tutors' recording of progress varies in quality.

■   The range of provision is good for both literacy and numeracy classes. Significant numbers of learners, including those referred by Jobcentre Plus, attend classes at local venues and times to suit their family and work commitments. By restructuring the courses, increasing hours and reducing the length of programmes, the service has improved retention rates significantly.

■   The links with an extensive range of partners, such as local charities, Jobcentre Plus, community groups, children's centres and schools, are particularly good. These have resulted in increased referrals and take up of provision in local venues. The partnership with Harlesden public library is excellent. The number of learners studying at the library and developing reading skills has increased substantially.

- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Support for dyslexic learners is excellent and has enabled several learners in the current year to read confidently; this achievement has had a significant impact on learners' lives. In-class support is satisfactory but tutors do not make sufficient use of the expertise of the support assistants. Information and advice about courses are satisfactory.

- Leadership and management of the provision have significantly improved and are good. The new manager has made significant changes, such as the appointment of key post holders, restructuring of courses and the introduction of a new portfolio-based curriculum. It is too soon to see the full impact on learners' outcomes.

- Tutors are highly experienced and well qualified. They receive effective support from managers. Communications are effective. Staff benefit from a comprehensive programme of staff development. Learning resources are good.

- Tutors promote equality and diversity well. They use learners' experiences and cultures in lessons to develop greater understanding of diversity among learners. Learners with poor prior learning experiences enjoy learning in their neighbourhood and gain qualifications, thus improving their life chances. Learners receive good support in safe learning venues. The service celebrates learners' success very well.

- Quality improvement arrangements are effective. Staff use a broad range of evidence, including learners' and partners' views, quality of teaching and data to conduct an accurate analysis of the provision at course level. The self-assessment process is satisfactory and accurately identifies the strengths and areas for improvement; however, inspectors judged the observation of teaching and learning grades to be too generous.

What does the London Borough of Brent need to do to improve further?

- Improve the success rates for learners by ensuring that all learners remain on the programme and continue to make good progress.

- Improve tutors' record keeping of learners' objectives and achievements in individual learning plans; establish regular sampling of the quality of these records within portfolios and ensure timely written feedback to learners on their progress.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by encouraging staff to increase the range of teaching methods, use creative approaches to maximise learning, and enable learners to work and think independently by using ILT to its maximum potential.

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)   Grade 2

Context

25. BACES offers 189 ESOL courses from four main sites and three children's centres and schools. Most learners take accredited programmes focusing on listening and speaking, with the option of a follow-up course in reading and/or writing. Some 75% of the learners were on pre-entry or entry level programmes. During the inspection week, 953 learners, of whom 79% are female, were attending the programmes.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are high, as are in-year retention rates at over 90%. Current learners are making good progress. Attendance and punctuality are also good, with many learners arriving well before the start of lessons.

- Learners achieve well. They develop good language skills including confidence and fluency, enhancing their self-esteem. Learners make well-researched and confident presentations. Learners on ESOL for work programmes are proud of their greatly enhanced employability skills. Pre-entry learners develop good literacy skills. They progress well from one level or mode of learning to the next.

- Learners develop their economic and social well-being significantly. They use their newly acquired skills to lead independent lives and enhance their employment prospects. They are more effective at dealing with their landlords, neighbours, council and medical staff. Others are confident in helping children with their homework, reading newspapers and letters from children's schools, or understanding notices and signs.

- Learners enjoy their lessons and are well motivated. They remain well focused on their aims and make good progress during lessons. They work very collaboratively, reinforcing a strong culture of peer support in many classes. They learn to respect other learners' viewpoints. Learners feel safe in all the venues.

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. They have high expectations of their learners. They employ thorough initial and diagnostic assessment, which they use well to plan lessons. Lessons run at a fast pace with ample challenge for the more able learners. Teachers constantly monitor learners' progress and offer constructive feedback promptly, helping learners to improve their skills.

- Tutors do not make sufficient use of ILT, even when it is available, to improve learners' experience. Some tutors do not insist on learners using language accurately. In higher-level lessons, tutors do not encourage learners to self-correct their errors systematically. Some learners do not get sufficient opportunities or guidance to develop pronunciation and intonation through repetition and correction.

- The range and breadth of programmes are outstanding, with clear progression routes to intermediate level from an impressive range of pre-entry and entry-level courses. Courses are offered at various times, including twilight hours, on many sites. Learners benefit from an extensive range of enrichment activities including visits to museums and cultural celebrations.

- The subject area's work with partner organisations benefits learners significantly. Excellent collaboration with the local Jobcentre Plus provides recruits for the ESOL for work programmes and attracts male learners who are under represented. Work with libraries has been highly effective in recruiting learners onto the 'six book challenge', through which they take up library membership and run a book club.

- The study and pastoral support for learners are good. Tutors provide a robust induction, so that learners are clear about what is expected of them and what the service provides. They receive strong support, both in class and out of class, together with effective pastoral care. Learners are well supported to catch up with any missed work. This has resulted in a significant improvement to retention since 2010/11.

- Leadership and management are outstanding. Managers have been highly effective in bringing about improvements and have provided clear direction. Communications are good. Staff value the support they receive and the good and frequent opportunities for staff development and sharing of best practice. The observation of teaching and learning enables tutors to improve their practice, although some lessons are over graded.

- Quality improvement arrangements and development planning have had a beneficial impact. The self-assessment is thorough, inclusive, and well focused on areas for improvement. The service makes good use of learners' views to improve programmes. Their valuable 'end of course' feedback informs self-assessment and the quality improvement plan. Staff follow appropriate procedures to keep learners safe.

- The service promotes equality and diversity and celebrates success well. Managers use data well to review and improve performance and narrow any gaps in achievement between different groups.

What does the London Borough of Brent need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning through improving language accuracy, with improved correction of errors and more frequent drilling of language particularly at higher levels of learning, and enabling learners to make greater use of e-learning.

Learning for social and personal development

Other social and personal development learning provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: information and communication technology, sports and recreation, preparation for life and work, business administration and law, and family learning.

Arts, media and publishing   Grade 3

Context

26. During the inspection week, approximately 180 learners were studying on a range of non-accredited programmes such as knitting, drawing and painting, cake decoration, pottery, fashion, kiln-formed glass and watercolour painting. The service also offers three accredited courses in cake decorating, photography and fashion. The service has considerably reduced the programme offer in this subject area since the previous inspection. The majority of the arts and crafts programmes are run from the Carlton Centre and from a range of other outreach venues. Most tutors are also current practitioners. Learners are predominantly female and from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key findings

■ Success rates are satisfactory. Retention rates on recently completed courses are high. Attendance is satisfactory and improving, although punctuality is poor on most courses. For the small number of learners on accredited courses, success rates are low.

■ Learners enjoy their courses and develop a satisfactory level of personal and vocational skills. In the kiln-formed glass and pottery classes, the standard of learners work is high. However, on one fashion course, learners have not developed an appropriate level of technical skills. In several other classes, the rate of learners' progress is slow.

■ Students feel safe and secure. They are fully aware of health and personal safety matters as well as to whom they should report any concerns. Tutors reinforce safe working guidance where necessary in lessons. Specialist accommodation and resources are good with a range of studios and specialist equipment.

■ Teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good, as claimed by the service. In the better lessons, learners are fully active, and develop a good range of skills. Conversely, in a few lessons, tutors fail to interest learners and do not use sharp questioning to check learning. All learners work at a mediocre pace with insufficient challenge for the more able.

■ Tutors' assessment is satisfactory. On accredited programmes and in the better lessons, tutors offer helpful written and verbal feedback, giving clear guidance to learners on their performance and developing their skills to a higher level. However, in a few lessons, tutors often fail to correct poor technical skills or to challenge learners to ensure they develop good quality skills.

- The range of programmes is satisfactory to meet learners' needs and interests. The service offers a good variety of specialist courses that enable learners to study subjects not offered elsewhere. However, progression opportunities for learners on accredited pathways are limited on many courses. Learners remain on the same programme for long periods, thus reducing the number of new learners able to enter courses.

- Partnerships with local organisations are effective and provide a wider range of opportunities for students to work on community projects. One particularly effective partnership enables learners to become involved in text-based public arts projects with a local artist, whilst others are involved in 'pop up' knitting clubs.

- Support for learners is satisfactory, including support on pastoral matters and also in-class support, which helps learners with both new and existing skills. Information, advice and guidance are inadequate as learners are not aware of progression options. The promotion of courses is ineffective as the course list is only available via the internet and it excludes those without the necessary access.

- The quality and use of individual learning plans are variable. The plans are individual but course based. Many learners repeat similar courses, but tutors do not consider the progress made by the learners on previous courses when devising a new learning plan. Learners are unable to build on their prior experience to ensure a continuous development of higher-level skills.

- Operational management of the programme, including communications, performance management and staff development, is satisfactory. The rationale for the range of courses and the potential client groups is not clear. The course offer has reduced since the last inspection without any significant improvements in outcomes and the quality of provision for learners.

- Tutors' promotion of equality and diversity is good. The large majority of learners, mainly from minority ethnic groups, attend programmes in local venues. They develop or improve their skills thus improving their mental and economic well-being. Learners' work reflects the diversity of their cultural backgrounds, benefiting from a wide range of styles and influences.

- Quality improvement, including the self-assessment process, is satisfactory. Tutors make a valuable input into the report through regular course reviews. The service overstated the grades for the quality of teaching and learning and the subject area. Observers of lessons do not focus sufficiently on learners' progress and outcomes. Targets in quality improvement plans are insufficiently rigorous to ensure standards consistently improve.

What does the London Borough of Brent need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all learners' skills and technical knowledge are developed to a high standard by setting good quality individual targets in their learning plans, which build on every learner's prior experience and knowledge.

- Improve the standard of teaching and learning by: ensuring that all tutors actively involve all learners in learning; setting a consistently challenging pace

for lessons; and, requiring learners to improve their punctuality in order to accelerate their own learning, skills and personal development.

■ Improve the marketing and publicity for programmes as well as the access to information, advice and guidance, to ensure learners understand the full range of options open to them, and make informed decisions regarding their progression.

■ Improve the accuracy of the self-assessment report to focus on key strengths and areas for improvement for teaching and learning, and ensure that targets in the quality improvement plan are set and monitored sufficiently rigorously to improve standards consistently.

Community development   Grade 2

Context

27. The provision includes targeted projects and long and short learning programmes, aimed at hard-to-reach learners and communities. The programmes are designed to build community capacity and skills, and help learners to become active citizens as well as improving their economic and social well-being.

28. Currently 543 adult learners are on programmes that include family learning courses, courses for learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties and courses to develop employability skills such as business administration and ICT. Targeted provision includes volunteering courses and ESOL for specific job sectors such as construction. Some 77% of learners are women, 78% are from minority ethnic groups, and over 30% have declared a disability. Many learners have not studied for many years and speak English as an additional language.

Key findings

- Retention, achievement and success rates are high and improving. Achievement and retention rates for family learning and learners with disabilities were well above national averages in 2010/11. Success rates for the small number of learners in business administration were unsatisfactory in 2010/11, but all current learners are progressing well. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Tutors ensure that learners' success is well celebrated.

- Learners develop good social and employability skills. They use computers competently to write business letters and compile professional curriculum vitae to seek work. Learners with disabilities become more confident in travelling and shopping. Parents and carers enjoy using arts and crafts to help their children with school work. Many progress to higher-level courses or volunteering, thus improving mental health and employment prospects.

- Learners feel very safe. They are confident to approach tutors to raise any concerns with them. BACES promotes personal safety well through posters and leaflets. Tutors reinforce health and safety well in lessons. Learners work safely, understanding the importance of personal protection and data security. Learners have a good understanding of the internet and e-safety.

- Teaching, training and learning are good. Tutors are well qualified and highly experienced. They plan lessons well, including a variety of activities to engage and maintain learners' interest, linking them skilfully to work and life. They use questioning well to test learners' knowledge and understanding. Tutors skilfully produce professional-quality handouts with effective use of text and graphics.

- Many tutors do not use initial assessment effectively to plan learning for individual learners. BACES does not use individual learning plans for all programmes. The quality and recording of progress on these plans are good in ICT but variable on other courses. A few tutors do not use ongoing assessment and feedback to learners to set them revised targets.

- The range of provision across the borough is good, allowing for progression up and across qualifications and preparation for employment in shortage skills areas. The outstanding range of courses in family learning includes courses such as baby massage, sewing with ESOL, art, literacy, numeracy and courses for fathers. Learners attest to the great benefits for families, especially from involving parents and carers more in their children's learning.

- Partnership working with national and local organisations and employers in the public, private and voluntary sector is outstanding. The numbers of new learners with little or no previous experience of successful study have increased greatly. Through bespoke programmes, such as accounting, volunteering, and employability training, BACES has significantly improved the capacity of voluntary groups and improved community relations.

- Support, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Tutors give particularly good personal support both in and outside of lessons. Learners with identified needs receive effective individual support from specialist staff, although tutors do not always refer students who need help, placing too much reliance on self-referral. Specialist support is often unavailable or ineffectively used in lessons where high numbers of learners need it. The service does not provide learners with sufficient exit advice on next steps.

- Curriculum managers share a sense of responsibility and purpose leading to improvement. Communications are good. Managers monitor staff performance effectively. Staff development is satisfactory except for a few sessional staff.

- The service promotes equality and diversity well. Staff have good awareness of issues that they incorporate imaginatively into their lessons and well-designed learning resources and activities. In one course, two deaf students are teaching signing to the other learners to aid communication. Achievement gaps between different groups of learners have narrowed significantly.

- Quality improvement is good. The service has produced an accurate self-assessment report using the views of all staff and learners. The observation of teaching and learning is now more rigorous. Managers support all tutors to improve their practice through detailed action planning after observations. Although teaching and learning have improved, some grades are overstated. Tutors practise effective internal verification of assessment.

What does the London Borough of Brent need to do to improve further?

- Improve tutors' use of the findings of initial assessments and target setting in individual learning plans in order to improve lesson planning. Make targets more individualised so that learners can progress according to their ability.

- Improve the effectiveness of learning support by identifying additional needs early in the programme. Use trained learning support assistants more effectively to support whole classes where appropriate.

Information about the inspection

29. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the borough's deputy head of Brent Adult and Community 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 funding body, 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.

30. Inspectors used group and 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 London Borough of Brent. 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)

London Borough of Brent

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	Social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners Part-time learners	2,578	15	2,246	317
Overall effectiveness	**2**	**3**	**2**	**2**
Capacity to improve	**2**			
A. Outcomes for learners	**2**	**3**	**2**	**2**
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2			
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3			
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. *Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?**	2			
A5. *How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?**	2			
B. Quality of provision	**2**	**3**	**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**	**3**	**2**	**2**
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2			
C2. *How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?**	2			
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3			
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?	2			
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2			
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