

# Birmingham City Council

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Inspection date

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

#### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Health and social care
- Information and communications technology (ICT)
- Crafts, creative arts and design
- Languages, literature and culture
- Education and training
- Preparation for life and work including literacy and numeracy,
- English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
- Independent living and leisure skills
- Employability training
- Business, administration and law
- Family learning
- learndirect

## Description of the provider

1. Birmingham City Council (BCC) provides government-funded provision for four groups of learners. Birmingham Adult Education Service (BAES) serves the largest of these groups, adult and community learners, with smaller provision for the Flying Start arts initiative and employability training provided through five projects across the city. These are jointly funded through Birmingham and Solihull LSC and the European Social Fund (ESF). In addition a learndirect centre is provided through the Birmingham City central library. Since April 2006, BAES has been part of the adults and communities directorate of BCC and is now a section of the younger adults service team. The head of BAES reports to the service director for younger adults who in turn reports to the strategic director for adults and communities. The cabinet member for adults and communities holds political accountability for the work of the directorate.
2. BAES holds further education, personal and community development learning and wider family learning contracts with Birmingham LSC. A family literacy language and numeracy (FLLN) contract is led by the Birmingham family learning service. BAES offers a mix of accredited and non-accredited courses. In 2005-06, there were 23,794 further education and 22,597 adult and community learning enrolments recorded to over 4,000 courses. There are currently 16,100 learners on courses in 15 subject sector areas and family learning and just over 23,000 enrolments.
3. BAES provides learning programmes through a network of centres, libraries and community centres. Facilities include nine main centres and more than 100 smaller venues offering programmes of vocational and non-vocational studies. The service is provided through four management teams at the Brasshouse language centre and the adult learning services for the south, north and east of the city.
4. The city is economically and socially diverse, with some inner city wards facing particular challenges. At the time of the 2001 census, approximately 30% of the population of Birmingham was from a minority ethnic background and nearly 17% of the population was born outside the United Kingdom. Birmingham is home to one of the largest Pakistani-Kashmiri communities outside of Kashmir and is said to have an overall Pakistani origin population of more than 200,000. The unemployment rates in some inner city wards are more than six times the national rate, such as in Aston at 24.6%, Washwood Heath at 23.9%, Nechells at 22.2%, Lozells at 21.6% and Sparkbrook at 21.4%. Nearly 59% of pupils achieved five GCSEs at grade C or above in 2006.
5. BAES was inspected by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in December 2003 and the provision in three areas of learning was satisfactorily reinspected in April 2005.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
ESF	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
learndirect	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
ESF	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
learndirect	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
ESF	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
learndirect	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
ESF	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
learndirect	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

## Sector subject area

Health and social care	Good: Grade 2
ICT	Good: Grade 2
Crafts, creative arts and design	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Languages, literature and culture	Good: Grade 2
Education and training	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory: Grade 3
ESOL	Good: Grade 2
Independent living and leisure skills	Inadequate: Grade 4
Employability training	Good: Grade 2
Business, administration and law	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Family learning	Good: Grade 2

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning  
ESF  
learndirect

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2  
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2  
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

6. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Success rates are satisfactory overall, with improving rates on accredited courses in childcare, science and mathematics, ICT, some languages, ESOL and the ESF employability training. Success rates on many business administration courses are low but are improving. Success rates on non-accredited courses are good.
7. The development of learners' personal, social and vocational skills is good. Learners gain in confidence and self-esteem. Their progress is satisfactory in most lessons and good in some subjects. Standards of work are satisfactory, with some examples that are very good.
8. The quality of provision is good. Employability programmes and learndirect programmes are good. More than two thirds of learners on BAES's programmes are in good provision. Progress is frequently assessed and monitored and most learners have individual learning plans, although these are not always effectively used.
9. BCC meets the needs of learners, the community and employers particularly well. The council forges useful links between employers and learning opportunities and builds provision which is thoughtfully designed to match the needs of the community and Birmingham's economy.
10. Support for learners is satisfactory. BAES has invested heavily in training many staff, including receptionists, in information, advice and guidance processes. Advisers and tutors offer appropriate financial, welfare and personal support. Well-trained volunteers and learning support assistants work alongside learners in class.
11. Leadership and management are good. Since the previous inspection of BAES there has been a carefully planned restructuring of the service with priority being given to curriculum management and development. Area and curriculum teams work together in a constructive way to produce a progressive programme that meets the needs of learners. There is collaboration between subjects. Clear and measurable targets are set at a strategic level and are promoted widely and reflected in area and curriculum plans. The development of systems for recording achievement and progress is also a collaborative process, and involves all members of relevant curriculum groups particularly well. The system for observing the quality of teaching and learning has been reviewed with a clear focus on the Common Inspection Framework, the recording of achievement and

progress and equalities criteria. This has yet to be developed for learndirect provision. The learndirect service has, however, been successfully integrated with other learning centre functions to create a holistic learning environment which benefits learners. Strategic and local plans are responsive, accessible and specific to the needs of learners and communities that BCC serves. BAES works hard to build capacity for community provision. Equality, diversity and inclusion are fundamental to BCC's provision. These aims are explicitly stated and understood by leaders, learners, staff, management and partners.

## Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

12. BCC has demonstrated good capacity to improve. Since the previous inspection of BAES, considerable improvements in curriculum management have been implemented. Success rates are improving and further accredited learning programmes have been developed. Partnerships remain very effective and very good progress has been made in developing employability training across the city. BCC's very good strategic planning and strong emphasis on widening participation continue to drive the provision forward.
13. The self-assessment process is good. It is inclusive and critical, taking into account the views of learners and partner agencies. It offers good background information and clear judgements about the provision. There is a great deal of consensus between the judgements and grades awarded by BCC and BAES and those of inspectors.
14. Quality assurance arrangements have greatly improved since the previous inspection of BAES and good clear procedures have been introduced. This has included an effective scheme for the observation of teaching and learning and a quality file for each subject sector and every course. Staff are clear about the value and purpose of quality assurance and are producing useful action plans to improve provision.

## Key strengths

- Good development of learners' personal, social and vocational skills
- Outstanding range of provision
- Very effective initiatives to meet the needs of local industry
- Strong city-wide strategic objectives
- Particularly good partnership working
- Very effective management strategies
- Very good initiatives to widen participation of hard-to-reach groups

## Key areas for improvement

- Success rates in some subject areas
- Planning and monitoring of individual learning
- Development of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills
- The development of programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- The coherence of quality improvement arrangements
- The identification and sharing of good practice



## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
ESF	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
learndirect	Contributory grade: satisfactory: Grade 3

15. Success rates are satisfactory overall, with improving achievement rates on accredited courses and the ESF employability training. For literacy and numeracy learners there has been a significant improvement in accreditation opportunities and the number of learners achieving on non-accredited family learning programmes has increased. This is recognised in the self-assessment report.
16. Success rates on many business administration courses have remained low but are improving. However, achievement on non-accredited courses is good.
17. Withdrawal rates from learndirect have increased from zero to the national average, with success rates currently at the national average.
18. The development of learners' personal, social and vocational skills is good. They gain in confidence and self-esteem. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities willingly participate and demonstrate developing social skills in many sessions. ESOL learners develop good language skills and visual arts learners attain good practical skills and techniques. Progress in lessons is satisfactory and in some subjects is good.
19. Standards of work are satisfactory, with some examples that are very good. For example, portfolios of work produced by learners on the Flying Start arts project contain carefully planned and well-presented records of work completed on work placement. Childcare learners show good attainment and presentation in their portfolios. Counselling learners demonstrate good practice in evaluating their own learning and in independent learning skills.

### Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
ESF	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
learndirect	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

20. The quality of provision is good. More than two thirds of learners on BAES's programmes are in good provision. BAES's observation of teaching and learning is thorough and accurate, as identified in the self-assessment report. Each area identifies strengths and areas for improvement, from which managers plan

effective training. While some lessons are planned to match the individual needs of learners, this does not yet happen consistently across the service.

Developments which encourage the use of electronic and digital technologies enliven and enhance learning and assessment practices. Progress is frequently assessed and monitored, but tutors do not always set specific and realistic targets. Most learners have individual learning plans. However, these are not always based on effective initial assessment and too often describe what learners have done, rather than set new and achievable targets. Key skills tutors help to embed literacy and numeracy in a range of programmes, but this is not always sufficiently contextualised.

21. BCC meets the needs of learners, the community and employers particularly well. This is a strength stated in the self-assessment report. A very wide range of well-maintained partnerships benefits learners by bringing a wealth of expertise and new funding opportunities to the provision. BCC forges useful links between employers and learning opportunities and builds provision which is thoughtfully designed to match the needs of the community and Birmingham's economy. Learners are given clear information about courses through a wide range of media, including well-designed booklets and signposting in public and community areas. Learners with disabilities and learning difficulties have contributed to the design of a booklet which presents information in very accessible formats.

22. Support for learners is satisfactory. BAES has invested heavily in training many staff, including receptionists, in information, advice and guidance processes. Where this works well, learners receive good advice about course requirements and what they need to progress to the next level. However, it is yet to be offered consistently across the provision. Advisers and tutors offer appropriate financial, welfare and personal support. Well-trained volunteers and learning support assistants work alongside learners in class.

## Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning  
ESF  
learndirect

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2  
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3  
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

23. Since the previous inspection of BAES there has been a deliberate and focused restructuring of the service with priority being given to curriculum management and development, as highlighted in the self-assessment report. New posts have been created in curriculum planning and management. This has led to an enhanced focus within the curriculum on service priorities which include vocational skills, accreditation up to level 2, skills for life, community development and employability. Area and curriculum teams work together in a concerted and constructive way to produce a cohesive service which is progressive and meets

the needs of learners. Curriculum leads have an overview of the provision, avoiding duplication. In addition there is collaboration between subjects. Clear and measurable targets are set at a strategic level and are promoted widely and reflected in area and service plans. However, there are very few measurable targets set at tutor level.

24. The development of systems for recording achievement and progress is also a collaborative process, and involves all members of relevant curriculum groups particularly well. Good progress has been made with this as stated in the self-assessment report. The service is very clear about the main aim, which is systematically and consistently to record learners' achievements and progress. However, some tutors have yet to make methodical use of this process.
25. There has been successful integration of the learndirect service with other learning centre functions. As a result a holistic learning environment which benefits learners has been created. Staff are fully and effectively involved in all operational matters. Clear and well thought out plans provide a good range of options for learners. Staff roles are well thought out and clearly allocated. Changes to provide a continuous service despite staff shortages are effective.
26. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. The system for observing the quality of teaching and learning has been reviewed with a clear focus on the Common Inspection Framework, recording of achievement and progress and equalities criteria. Observations take place for most tutors once every 24 months. There is a great deal of consensus between the judgements and grades awarded by BAES and those of inspectors. However, as yet there is no overall plan to assure that every tutor is observed within the prescribed timeframe. In addition there is no overall system that checks that the issues identified following observations are reliably addressed for each tutor. Course file audits currently pick up issues but do not ensure that the necessary actions are undertaken by the relevant tutor leading to improvement.
27. The aim to widen and, more importantly, increase participation of the most disadvantaged learners is central to the development of provision within BCC. The aim is not only understood exceptionally well but also implemented by all who work within BCC. Leadership and management are clear and purposeful in their intent. Strategic and local plans reflect provision that is responsive, accessible and specific to the needs of learners and communities that BCC serves. BCC works in partnership with many organisations to prioritise the most appropriate sites for some of this provision. Partners work effectively with BAES's staff to develop the curriculum to ensure that it meets its stated aims. Partners are active in accessing and recruiting new learners. BAES works hard to build capacity for community provision. Equality, diversity and inclusion are fundamental building blocks onto which BCC's provision is built. These are explicitly stated and understood by leaders, learners, staff, management and partners.

## What learners like:

- The commitment of staff
- ICT training – ‘learning ICT has given me the confidence to go back to work’
- The support throughout the courses
- ‘I find it (family learning) enjoyable. I like supporting my child’
- Support for disabled learners – ‘I have mobility problems and the staff offered to change the room to help me’
- Developing employability skills – ‘It’s a difficult job market at the moment and we need to speak English’
- ‘Using my skills for commercial work’
- Encouragement to do well – ‘I achieved above my expectations’
- ‘This is helping me to be a better parent’
- ‘Good emotional support through mentoring’

## What learners think could improve:

- Skills for life provision – ‘we’d like more classes’
- The equipment in some classes – ‘greater opportunities to use technology’
- More canteen facilities
- More information on progression opportunities and the availability of level 3 courses to allow for progression

## Sector subject areas

### Health and social care

Good: Grade 2

#### Context

28. The provider's health and social care provision includes programmes on childcare, counselling, complementary therapies and personal development. In 2006-07, 1,206 learners have enrolled on over 124 courses. Of the learner intake, 90% are women and 40% come from minority ethnic groups. Childcare courses are offered at pre-national vocational qualification (NVQ) level up to NVQs at level 2 and counselling is offered at introductory and level 2. Currently, 181 learners are on childcare NVQs and 125 learners are on level 2 counselling courses. Complementary therapy and personal development courses are held throughout the year and are usually short, non-accredited courses lasting between 10 and 30 hours. The provision is delivered by 46 mainly part-time tutors and courses are available in over 24 venues in various parts of the city.

#### Strengths

- Good achievement rates on childcare courses
- High standard of learners' work
- Good teaching and learning
- Good support for learners
- Very effective curriculum management

#### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient availability of ICT for some learners
- Insufficient progression advice and guidance available to some learners

#### Achievement and standards

29. Success rates on the level 2 childcare NVQ are good. Over the past three years achievements on these courses have been improving year by year. In 2005-06 the success rate was 82%, exceeding the national average of 67%. On all other courses achievements are satisfactory. Retention overall is satisfactory. In 2005-06 retention was 92% on accredited courses and 67% on non-accredited courses.

30. The standard of learners' work is high and attainment is good. Many learners recruited to these programmes start with low levels of prior attainment and significant barriers to learning. Many learners make very good progress against targets set at the start of the course. Learners produce clear, detailed portfolios of evidence, some of which are outstanding. Work in portfolios is clearly related to the assessment process which is fully understood by most learners. Learners show a good understanding of the issues discussed in class and the practical

application of background knowledge to practice on returning from their work placements. Much of the work done requires the learners to evaluate their own learning, especially on the counselling courses, and this allows for the good development of independent learning skills.

### Quality of provision

31. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and have clear aims and objectives. Tutors ensure lessons are challenging but are careful to meet the different individual needs of learners. Much of the learning is activity based and focused on practice that can be successfully used in work placements. Particularly effective use is made of role-play and learners work well with each other in small groups. Tutors are careful to ensure that activities in class are representative of the ethnic diversity that learners will find in their work placements. In most classes progress is carefully checked and monitored by tutors and work is clearly applied to the relevant assessment criteria. Many learners also take skills for life qualifications and this work is often taught by specialist tutors in vocational classes.
32. Support for learners is good. All learners have pre-course advice and guidance sessions that give detailed information and a chance to meet tutors. Tutors are approachable and willing to offer extra help with assignments and offer help for learners to overcome personal problems that might hinder their attendance on the course. Many learners make good use of the crèche facilities and support for childcare fees and the purchase of textbooks from the access fund. This support removes a major barrier preventing them from either entering or continuing on a learning programme.
33. A wide range of courses is provided in various community locations across the city but especially in areas of relative deprivation and social exclusion. Many courses are arranged at times that suit domestic and work responsibilities. There are clear pathways of progression from level 1 to level 2 for most learners.
34. The use of ICT on some courses is insufficient. This is often reflected in course design. Learners on these courses are unable to enhance their portfolio presentations or prepare good-quality practical displays for use on work placements. Those childcare learners with access to ICT are benefiting from the use of the internet to develop resources and knowledge for working with children. Other learning resources and equipment available is satisfactory.
35. Advice and guidance about progression opportunities is insufficient for some level 2 learners. Learners have difficulties in identifying appropriate and accessible level 3 provision and in some parts of the city there appears to be little coherent planning between the adult education service and local colleges. Learners coming to the end of their level 1 childcare course had no firm information about where level 2 provision was to be offered in the following year and whether childcare facilities were going to be available to them. Many childcare learners are keen to

progress to level 3 as it is now the benchmark qualification for gaining employment in the sector.

### Leadership and management

36. Management of the curriculum is very effective. Communication between staff is good. The curriculum manager works well with the teaching and learning managers to ensure there is continuous quality monitoring of courses and that quality improvement plans are developed on the basis of these reviews. There is a comprehensive process for observing teaching and learning. Particularly good support is given to new tutors, with action plans being agreed and follow-up observations made as required. Senior lecturers often also take on the internal verification role and there is a continuous process of ensuring assessment standards and practices are fully developed. Staff are encouraged to take further training for continuous professional development. A wide range of staff development opportunities is available through BAES and some are organised for specific subject-based tutorial staff. Tutorial staff are valued and part of a close knit curriculum team. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and learners are sensitive to cultural, religious and lifestyle issues in their practical work. Staff and learners contribute to the self-assessment process and managers produced a good report that accurately reflects the quality of the sector subject area.

## Information and communication technology

Good: Grade 2

### Context

37. Courses in ICT are offered in a variety of community venues such as libraries, schools and community centres throughout the city, at various times of the day and evening from Monday to Saturday. Qualifications are offered from entry level 3 to level 3. At the time of inspection, 3,195 learners, mostly adults, were enrolled on courses. Seventy tutors, mostly part time, are supported by five teaching and learning managers, three part-time senior lecturers and a full-time specialist subject curriculum leader.

### Strengths

- Good achievement on most courses.
- Particularly good additional social and economic benefits for learners
- Good initiatives to widen participation in response to local needs
- Highly effective support for learners with disabilities
- Good curriculum area management

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient sharing of good teaching practice

### Achievement and standards

38. Achievements on most courses are good. In total, 6,517 learners enrolled in ICT courses in 2005-06. Of the 1,920 learners who enrolled on courses leading to unit certification at entry 3 level in 2005-6, 98% achieved their qualification. Most of these learners had little or no previous experience using ICT before joining the course. Achievement on parts 1 and 2 of the examination-based qualification in information technology (IT) were good at 80% and 79% respectively. Enrolments on short courses produced an achievement rate of 100%. Overall retention in 2004-05 was 75% and by 2005-06 had risen to 85%. Achievement across all ICT courses in 2005-06 was 86%. Learners acquired a wide range of ICT skills. The standard of learners' work was at least satisfactory and often better. Some learners' work showed a high degree of creativity and skill, particularly when assignments were linked to their interests and cultural backgrounds. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Achievement for the 1,465 learners enrolled in 2005-06 on the introductory computer literacy course and the computer literacy and business technology course was poor, with success rates standing at 42% and 34% respectively. As stated in the self-assessment report, the poor achievement on these courses was recognised by managers and unit-only course options were introduced. This has proved highly successful with learners.



## Quality of provision

39. The additional social and economic benefits experienced by learners are particularly good. In addition to practical skills, learners develop many new skills which contribute significantly to their economic and social well-being. They gain increased confidence and self-esteem, raising their aspirations on return to employment. They aim for higher or further education qualifications and become socially more integrated. For learners who speak English as an additional language, reading paper-based exercises and completing assignments has improved their range of English language skills. Use of the internet to source best value goods and services is economically beneficial. Many learners are improving communication with family members, particularly young people, through a shared interest in and knowledge of ICT.
40. Good initiatives to widen participation in response to local needs have been established. BCC works in partnership with schools, parents' groups and national organisations. ICT provision has been introduced to communities and groups who would have had little or no facilities to access. Parents at schools have been taught how to access the internet through the use of a fully equipped van with broadband internet access and a supply of laptop computers. Short taster courses have been particularly successful in providing a starting point for learners to overcome their initial lack of confidence. Parents are offered mentors to help them. New courses have been developed in driving theory (hazard perception), digital imaging and routes to careers designed to stimulate interest in ICT among a wider population. Half of all learners are from disadvantaged postcodes and more than 35% are of minority ethnic origin.
41. Learners with disabilities receive good support. A confidential system is in place to advise learners and tutors on what additional help would most suit their needs. BAES has produced a comprehensive guide detailing the support that disabled learners can access. Included in the guide is information on local transport with low-floor easy access and where additional information, advice and guidance can be obtained on a wide range of issues. If a disabled learner has a carer to assist them, the carer is welcomed to join the course where appropriate. A befriender scheme is operating in some areas. A range of adaptive technology, including height adjustable tables, adaptive keyboard and CCTV to enlarge text books onto a large monitor is used effectively by learners.
42. The range of courses, which has been expanded in the past year, is satisfactory and meets the needs of learners and employers. Resources are good in the main centres but vary in quality in some community venues. The initial assessment and recording of learners' progress is generally satisfactory.

## Leadership and management

43. Curriculum management is good. Following a restructuring and the appointment of an ICT specialist to manage the area, BAES has identified and made significant quality improvements. Strategic and operational plans clearly state the provider's

priorities. A system to ensure that tutors routinely enter learners for examinations, the introduction of unit-based qualification options and new qualifications at entry and level 3 have improved the service to learners. Information, advice and guidance have been improved and an exit strategy developed to ensure that each learner has a clear progression plan. An internet-based information portal for learners and tutors has been planned to aid communication and the sharing of good practice. This was an initiative identified in the self-assessment report's development plan.

44. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. However, good practice is not routinely shared with other tutors. Although teaching overall is satisfactory, a number of particularly good tutors are using a wide variety of teaching methods in ways that stimulate learners and add considerably to the learners' experience. Most observation of teaching practice is good, although some observations do not highlight areas of weakness or good practice in teaching. Attendance at staff meetings is poor and any particularly good practice introduced at the meetings only reaches a few tutors.
45. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. Tutors from a wide variety of minority ethnic backgrounds and cultures provide good role models for learners. The multicultural makeup of most classes promotes social interaction. There is, however, a significant imbalance between the numbers of men and women on courses, with only 20% of learners being men.

## Crafts, creative arts and design

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

46. This sector subject area comprises 470 courses taking place in 66 centres. The curriculum includes courses in craft, drawing and painting, floristry, pottery, sugarcraft and textiles. Provision is also offered in dance, music, photography and digital media but this was not included in the inspection.
47. Most of the provision is non-accredited but is mapped to national qualification frameworks. There has been a recent focus on increasing the number of accredited courses targeted at the needs of local communities. In 2005-06 there were 11 accredited courses, in 2006-07, 38 courses.
48. Of the 2,887 learners on programme, 80% are women. On accredited programmes 36% of learners are from minority ethnic groups and 10% of all learners declare a disability. The age profile of learners ranges from under 25 to over 65, with learner numbers increasing towards the over 65s and accounting for 32% of all learners.

### Strengths

- Good attainment of practical skills and techniques
- Good range of programmes and venues for learning
- Good self-assessment and development planning

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient rigour in assessment practice on non-accredited programmes
- Insufficient attention to the development of creative and presentational skills
- Uninspiring learning resources

### Achievement and standards

49. Learners demonstrate good attainment of skills in their practical work. They handle a range of media and confidently control a variety of visual techniques. On accredited programmes standards are at the level required for the qualification aim. On non-accredited programmes learners demonstrate skills in advance of course requirements.
50. Some 77% of learners working towards accredited courses are retained. On accredited and non-accredited programmes, those learners retained invariably achieve the qualification aim. In 2005-06 the overall success rates for non-accredited and accredited programmes were 67% and 58% respectively. The success rate for art and crafts is 72%, where 1,631 learners completed the

programme. The success rates for the smaller number of accredited programmes vary significantly, from outstanding on the art and craft programme at 100% to inadequate in textiles and clothing with a success rate of 16%.

### Quality of provision

51. The range of creative arts courses and programme levels accessible to learners in venues across the city is good. Course programmes are increasingly being introduced to serve the needs of under-represented communities in areas of high deprivation. Of late there has been a significant increase in the number of accredited course programmes, with learners able to progress from entry level to level 2.
52. Teaching is satisfactory. In the better lessons tutors were well prepared. Aims and objectives for learning sessions were clearly set out with activity paced to add variety and rigour. In these better lessons it was possible to see the positive progress being made by learners. In weaker sessions learners were not challenged. While tutors adequately demonstrated the techniques and processes to be practised, too many learners applied this to mundane personal projects.
53. Assessment practice on accredited programmes is satisfactory, with tutors reviewing learners' progress during each course unit. Assessment is used as a development tool for learners and internal verification as a vehicle to improve assessment practice. Rigour in assessment practice on non-accredited programmes is insufficient. The assessment of learners' work is weak, being no more than a record of course syllabus elements completed.
54. The development of creative and presentational skills is given insufficient attention. Creative arts learners are not routinely encouraged to maintain sketch and ideas books. Other than in rare exceptions, learners do not experiment with a range of graphic techniques, materials and technology to explore creative concepts. With notable exceptions, portfolios of evidence for assessment on accredited courses are often poorly presented. Insufficient attention is paid to the quality of visual evidence and supporting text. Course content and learners' portfolios demonstrate that tutors and learners rarely use contemporary technology to support teaching, learning and creative practice.
55. Many learning environments used by creative arts learners are uninspiring, and some are unsuited for purpose. In some classes furniture is unsuitable for the work being done. Classrooms lack stimulating displays of learners' work. Where work is displayed it is often poorly presented and rarely updated. There is a lack of visual stimulus for learners through ready access to appropriate reference books, magazines and electronic media.

### Leadership and management

56. Self-assessment and development planning are good. They are concise yet accurate, setting out clearly the strengths and areas for improvement in

provision. A realistic development plan builds on self-assessment findings and is informed by service and national priorities for adult and community learning. The sector subject area has a critical and realistic view of its provision.

57. Quality assurance procedures are satisfactory. The tutors' course file compliance check system and observation of teaching and learning scheme are satisfactory. Several tutors are yet to have their teaching practice observed and their course file checked for compliance with required standards. In the best practice, tutors maintain comprehensive course records supplementing standardised documents with their own material to create detailed records of learners' progress and evaluations of teaching. In poorer practice learners' records are brief and several aspects of required documents are not in place. Where this poor practice is revealed through monitoring, arrangements are set up to support tutors in the effective management of their course. Similarly, support and development is made available to tutors following observation and reviews of teaching. Separately, staff development exists for tutors to study towards teaching qualifications. The recent move to a curriculum-based adult education service is seeing an increasing emphasis on subject-based staff development activity for a predominantly qualified group of subject specialist tutors. Equality of opportunity is clearly understood and well promoted.

## Languages, literature and culture

Good: Grade 2

### Context

58. BAES provides courses in 27 languages at the Brasshouse Language Centre and 28 other sites. In addition to British Sign Language and many European languages, courses in languages such as Cantonese, Urdu, Punjabi and Arabic are available. Language programmes run between 30 to 34 weeks and are offered by day, evenings and on Saturdays. Brasshouse is also a centre for non-funded provision of courses in English as a foreign language.

59. Languages are offered at a range of levels from entry to level 3 and beyond. There are also GCSEs and A levels in English and many foreign languages. Asset language assessments are used to accredit learner skills. At the time of inspection 5,658 learners are on programme and attend 479 courses. In 2005-06 the service enrolled 10,478 learners, of whom 61% were female and 19% from minority ethnic groups. The languages programme is delivered by 197 sessional tutors.

### Strengths

- High pass rates for GCSE and GCE exams
- Good use of the target language
- Outstanding range of provision
- Good response to needs of local industry
- Good support for learners with disabilities
- Strong management of curriculum development

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient attention to individual learner needs in programme planning
- Insufficient analysis and use of data

### Achievement and standards

60. The pass rates on GCSEs and GCE courses in modern foreign languages in 2005-06 were high. Passes for GCSE were 97.6% with 29% of learners achieving an A\* grade. At AS level, 97% and at A level 99% of candidates passed, with 79% and 72% achieving grade C or above respectively. Early pass rates for the Asset assessment system of accrediting language skills, piloted in 2004-05 and run for the first time in 2005-06, are also high.

61. Overall success rates for the sector subject area are satisfactory. They rose from 59% in 2004-05 to 68% in 2005-06. BAES has recently changed to calculating success rates. Previously it used achievement, which was close to 100% in much of the provision for those learners who completed their courses. Much of the provision which was previously non-accredited is now accredited.

62. Modern foreign language learners develop all four language skills satisfactorily. Written work is good using appropriate structures and registers. Some pronunciation is distinctly Anglophone but does not hinder understanding.

### Quality of provision

63. Modern foreign language tutors and many learners make good and widespread use of the target taught language. In better lessons the language is used both as the classroom language and, through the appropriate use of the communicative approach, encourages the development of learners' fluency and acquisition of new vocabulary and grammatical structures. Many tutors are native speakers of the languages being taught and model both pronunciation and idiom well.

64. The range of provision in modern foreign languages is outstanding. This is clearly identified in the self-assessment report. The particularly large number of languages includes less frequently taught languages including community languages such as Urdu and Punjabi and languages from new European Union member countries such as Polish and Czech, as well as the historically popular French, Spanish and Italian. Clear progression opportunities for learners are provided. Most courses are split into three terms over the academic year but five-week 'get by' courses are also offered. Many courses are run at Brasshouse in the city centre, which is effectively a language college and attracts learners from neighbouring regions. Other courses are run in community venues throughout the city, where their accessibility attracts learners unwilling or unable to travel into the city centre.

65. The response to the needs of local industry is good. Brasshouse provides a professional translation and interpreting service to local organisations as well as bespoke language training. Firms also use the funded provision to access language training for their staff. Many local school teachers use BAES's language courses to prepare them to teach foreign languages to their pupils.

66. Support for learners with disabilities on modern foreign language and English programmes is good. Tutors have received disability awareness training and access additional support for learners through the service learning support management system as required. Examples include commentary on pictures used as prompts or Braille used on cards in language learning games for blind learners and the provision of hearing induction loops for those with impaired hearing.

67. Insufficient attention is paid to learners' individual needs in programme planning. In accredited provision, individual learning plans contain appropriate learning objectives to achieve the intended qualification. The plans do not, however, generally contain additional personal goals. These are not sufficiently considered in the production of schemes of work or lesson plans and progress toward and achievement of these goals is poorly recorded. Tutors do use some differentiated teaching methods in lessons but the planning of this is also inadequately recorded.

## Leadership and management

68. The management of curriculum development in modern foreign languages is strong. The management team has made a good decision to move towards entirely accredited provision. This secures the continuation of the broad range of affordable language courses. Where available BAES uses the Asset assessment system, successfully piloted in 2004-05, to accredit achievement of language skills levels against the nationally recognised language ladder set of language level descriptors. This system clarifies progression routes within the provision and facilitates transfer to and from other providers at the correct level for learners who move home. As stated in the self-assessment report, it has successfully identified and introduced a number of other assessments and examinations for those languages not yet available through Asset.
69. Staff development is good. The observation of teaching and learning system produces appropriate action plans to improve performance. Teaching staff are encouraged to attend regular training sessions. Staff obtain appropriate teaching qualifications with particular relevance to the teaching of foreign languages. Communication is good within Brasshouse and satisfactory in the other centres and areas.
70. English GCSE and GCE course management is sensibly combined with that of skills for life courses. This provides clear and practical progression routes for learners from those programmes.
71. Insufficient use is made of data to identify trends in the provision or set performance targets for staff. Performance data which is collected is not routinely analysed to compare the provision. There is some comparison of further education and adult and community learning funded provision and by age, gender and ethnicity, but this does not extend to systematic comparison by centre or by language group or level.
72. Equality of opportunity is promoted and learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Disability awareness is good. Self-assessment is satisfactory and broadly reflects the findings found on inspection.



## Education and training

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

73. Currently 603 learners are on education and training programmes. Of these, 354 are on classroom assistant courses, 100 on the teaching assistant courses and 126 on the certificate in further education teaching. In addition, there are 23 learners on short courses. Classroom assistant courses lead to recognised qualifications at stages 1 and 2, while courses for teaching assistants lead to an NVQ at level 2. Classroom and teaching assistants are assessed on their work performance in local schools while the practical skills of trainee teachers are assessed on the job in further education colleges and adult education centres.

74. Courses are from 12 hours for introductory courses to one day a week for 30 weeks for stage 2 or 3 of the certificate in further education teaching. Courses are taught during the day and in the evening at the training and staff development centre and in a wide range of venues around the city. Of the learner intake, 239 are from minority ethnic groups, 394 are from areas of high deprivation, 28 have a disability and 38 are men.

### Strengths

- Good achievement rates on teacher training courses
- Very good success rates on the Flying Start programme
- Good development of personal and professional competences
- Good progression
- Very successful strategies to widen learner participation

### Areas for improvement

- Low success rates on classroom assistants' courses
- Insufficient development of learners' literacy and numeracy competences
- Insufficient identification of learners' individual needs

### Achievement and standards

75. Success rates on teacher training courses are good. Of the 43 learners who joined a course in the 2004-05, 88% successfully completed. Of the 98 learners starting in 2005-06, 95% were retained and 83% achieved their qualification. The success rate on the introductory certificate in delivering learning is very good at 90%.

76. Success rates on the 15-week Flying Start programme are very high at 98% for 2003-05 and 95% for 2005-07. Learners benefit considerably from the programme by developing planning and teaching skills. Mentoring, support and careers guidance for learners are very good and theory and practice are

effectively combined. Learners' employability is greatly increased and the arts industry gains by having a pool of well-trained learning and workshop facilitators.

77. Learners on classroom and teaching assistant courses and teacher training programmes develop a good range of personal and professional competences. Their confidence and self-esteem increase and they become more adept at solving problems and working collaboratively with other learners. Most learners have a good understanding of the need to develop pupils' writing, reading and creative skills and of the importance of accurate record-keeping.
78. Progression routes for learners are good. Those who are considering becoming classroom or teaching assistants take a 12-hour course to introduce them to working in classrooms. They have good opportunities to progress to classroom assistant courses at levels 1 and 2 and to teaching assistant courses at level 2. Many learners progress into employment when they have completed their training.
79. Success rates on classroom assistant courses were low in 2005-06. At stage 1, although 78% of learners were retained, only 60% succeeded in obtaining the award. At stage 2, 82% of learners were retained but only 44% of those achieved. The low success rate at stage 2 has been acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Some learners have difficulty staying on courses and achieving due to personal or family problems.
80. Overall, the standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Some learners, however, produce work of a very high standard.

#### Quality of provision

81. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Most lessons are satisfactorily prepared and confidently taught by the tutors. The content is varied and good opportunities are given to learners to work together on practical activities. Before beginning a course, learners receive satisfactory information, advice and guidance and their suitability for the chosen course is satisfactorily assessed. The training and staff development centre is well resourced with computing equipment, information learning technology (ILT), textbooks, magazines and videos.
82. The development of some learners' literacy and numeracy competences is insufficient. Although most learners are given a literacy and numeracy assessment, not all learners have their strengths and areas for development systematically diagnosed. There is insufficient development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills within the context of their course. Grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors in written work are not always brought to learners' attention.
83. Learners' individual learning needs are not sufficiently identified and recorded. Although all learners are provided with an individual learning plan, most learners are unfamiliar with their contents. Plans for one group of learners, in the fourth week of a 10-week course, contained no entries. In another class, all the plans

contained identical targets. Learning is insufficiently matched to learners' learning needs, abilities, prior experience and aspirations.

## Leadership and management

84. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strategies to widen participation are very successful. Courses are well publicised and marketed to attract learners, including those who are returning to study after many years' absence. Classroom and teaching assistants' courses are run throughout the city in various locations, on different days and at different times to give learners maximum opportunities to access them. Learners living in areas of high deprivation or from minority ethnic communities are given strong encouragement to join teacher training programmes and the Flying Start course. Forty-two per cent of current learners on teacher training courses and 69% of the artists trained to date on the Flying Start programme are from minority ethnic groups. There is good inclusion of deaf learners on initial teacher training courses and interpreters are provided when needed. Support to help learners overcome barriers to learning, such as childcare needs, and help with exam fees, is good.
85. Internal verification processes are thorough. Courses are satisfactorily evaluated and learners' feedback is analysed and used to improve the quality of the provision. Data is not fully used to monitor the provision. Teaching and learning observations do not always identify areas for development and some lesson grading is too generous. Staff development opportunities are satisfactory. The identification and sharing of good practice within centres is satisfactory but between centres it is insufficiently developed.

## Literacy and numeracy

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

86. Literacy and numeracy courses are taught as part of BAES's skills for life provision. They are offered across BCC's three operational areas at a variety of times, days and venues close to local communities. Eighty centres are currently in use with a total of 2,042 learners enrolled on literacy courses and 812 learners enrolled on numeracy courses. Courses are offered at entry level and level 1 and 2. Some courses are designed to cater for those with specific learning difficulties including dyslexia. All courses are part-time and are predominately offered for two hours a week. There are two curriculum leaders with responsibilities for the provision supported by four full-time and 10 part-time managers and 120 tutors who are mainly part time.

### Strengths

- Effective strategy to improve accreditation opportunities for learners
- Very wide range of provision
- Good staff development

### Areas for improvement

- Slow progress for many learners
- Weak target-setting

### Achievement and standards

87. Accreditation opportunities for learners have improved, as one of BAES's key strategy objectives and as identified in the self-assessment report. In the year 2005-06, 367 literacy and 238 numeracy learners were registered for accredited qualifications. Of these, 87% of literacy learners and 100% of numeracy learners achieved their qualification. In the current year, 48% of literacy learners and 75% of numeracy learners have been enrolled onto accredited courses.

88. The development of learners' skills is satisfactory. Learners improve their self-confidence while taking part in their courses. They demonstrate that they are able to discuss topics confidently in whole group sessions and, where appropriate, read their own work out loud to the class. Attendance is satisfactory, as are punctuality rates on most courses. However, there is some poor punctuality by learners attending evening classes.

89. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Learners complete a range of activities during their classes which include letter writing and writing stories about their research into specific topics. Learners take pride in their work and make

good use of folders to store their work and to enhance the presentation. However, in some classes learners do not present their work well and lack the skills and initiative to improve.

90. Progress for many learners is slow. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. The current provision offers the first rung on the ladder for many adults who have had little previous educational experience or negative experiences of learning. Learners are typically over 25 years old and more than two thirds of learners have been assessed at entry level 3 or below. Predominately courses are for only two hours a week. Some learners do complete homework but most learners lack the ability and motivation to study independently and do not enhance their learning during the rest of the week. Their progress is slow, with many learners attending classes for two or three years. Additionally there is little formal identification and recording of learners' progression from entry level to levels 1 and 2.

### Quality of provision

91. The range of provision is very wide. Literacy and/or numeracy classes are offered in 80 centres throughout the Birmingham area. They are located in areas designated as having most need and are carefully chosen to ensure access by public transport. BAES has forged effective links with community groups and offers many courses in community centres, leisure centres and libraries in addition to those taught in adult and community learning centres. Some courses cater for specific learning needs including dyslexia, spelling and workplace literacy.

92. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are planned well and the necessary resources are identified and available. In the better lessons, tutors make full use of a range of teaching methods including whole-group, pair and individual learning. Learners made good use of ICT, for example by word-processing some of their work and using specific programmes to improve their spelling or multiplication. Tutors use a wide range of learning materials to stimulate learning and carefully differentiate these materials to cater for the wide range of abilities found in most classes. However, in some classes too much use is made of worksheets and there are few opportunities for free writing by learners. Worksheets or topics used in some classes are not linked to learners' interests and little use is made of everyday items such as newspapers and the text found on food packaging. Individual learning support is good in most classes. Tutors make good use of volunteers and offer much individual support themselves during lessons.

93. Target-setting is weak. All learners take part in an initial assessment of their literacy and/or numeracy skills. The results of these assessments form the basis of agreed individual learning needs and targets to achieve these needs are recorded within learning plans. However, most targets are generic and not specific enough for their achievement to be accurately identified. In some learning plans targets are the same for all learners while in others no reviews of

progress have taken place. In many learning plans the evidence of target achievement is not cross-referenced to any piece of work. Learning plans do not differentiate between short-term, long-term or group targets.

## Leadership and management

94. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The provision is effectively managed within three main areas of the city. There has been an annual turnover of staff of approximately 10%. The recently introduced new management structure has helped to improve the provision and lines of communication between all staff are now more effective. Opportunities for tutors to share good practice have increased, although this important aspect of quality improvement is in its early stages.
95. Staff development is good. There is a real commitment by managers to ensure that tutors and other members of staff either hold or are working towards relevant professional qualifications. Thirty-five tutors hold subject-specific teaching qualifications and currently there are 23 tutors working towards them. Forty-nine tutors have completed their certificate of education and 57 tutors hold a range of other teaching qualifications. Eight tutors hold a specific dyslexia qualification. All volunteers aim to achieve learner support qualifications. Tutors are encouraged to take part in other training initiatives designed to enhance their skills. The provider has an effective mentoring programme in place which effectively helps new tutors.
96. Equality and diversity are promoted well and demonstrated in teaching practices. Learners are aware of appropriate support arrangements for learners with disabilities and promotional material reflects the diversity of the population. BAES collects data on participation rates by gender, ethnicity and whether learners have a disability, and uses this to identify retention and achievement trends.
97. The self-assessment report is largely accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The development plan includes a range of activities to further improve the provision. Quality assurance procedures have improved since the previous inspection and more effective processes have been introduced such as the quality file and a more useful observation of teaching and learning scheme.

## ESOL

Good: Grade 2

### Context

98. At the time of the inspection, 4,972 learners were enrolled on ESOL programmes. Through BAES, BCC offers classes at adult education centres and at community venues throughout the area. Learners can join courses at the beginning of each term and usually attend one learning session a week. There are some ESOL intensive learning programmes available. All learners work to achieve the learning goals agreed with them at the start of their programme. ESOL entry level 3, level 1 and level 2 courses have 2,331 learners. Learners at entry levels 1 and 2 mainly work toward individual learning targets but will be expected to gain qualifications. Sessions run for two or three hours a day.

### Strengths

- High achievement and retention rates
- Good development of language skills
- Good teaching and learning
- Good management of provision

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of ILT to promote independent learning

### Achievement and standards

99. Achievement rates are high. In 2005-06 achievement was 90%. Retention was good at 86% and all learners worked towards individual learning targets. Learners are now effectively encouraged to take national qualifications at entry level 3, level 1 and level 2. Learners are making good progress towards this goal. The standard of learners' work is good. At the time of inspection 489 learners had been entered for qualifications. Monitoring of attendance is good.

100. The development of learners' language skills is good. Learners are able to demonstrate new skills in the workplace and in the community. Most learners improve their ability to communicate more effectively in English in situations critical to their economic and social well-being.

### Quality of provision

101. Teaching and learning are good. All learners complete an effective initial assessment at the beginning of the course which covers reading, writing, speaking and listening. A comprehensive individual learning plan is then negotiated with learners. In the best lessons tutors were planning well for the

course and individual needs. Classes are lively with challenging tasks to enable learners to demonstrate new skills effectively. Tutors use a variety of teaching styles and methods effectively to stimulate learning. Lesson planning fully encompasses the speaking and listening, reading and writing aspects of ESOL. Most lessons are linked to the scheme of work for the qualification but also have elements of citizenship and employability skills. Learners are given constructive feedback about their progress in class and for course requirements. Reviews are termly but targets are also signed off on completion and new targets set.

102. Tutors prepare a range of activities and resources to challenge and stimulate learning, including individual, paired, small group and whole class activities. Tutors are good at developing learners' skills in the context of topics that are relevant to learners' everyday lives. They have a good understanding of learners' difficulties in grasping concepts. They provide good explanations and adapt their teaching methods to help learners fully understand the concepts and methods they are learning.

103. Assessment is continuous throughout the course by learners and tutors. Learners are formally assessed at the end of each term. Course reviews give good feedback about the process. However, there is insufficient use of assessment information to plan for individual needs. The comprehensive individual learning plan is not routinely used when planning lessons. Most teachers plan against the course criteria and do not recognise individual aims. Differentiated teaching methods are shown by a range of activities around the theme but do not identify learners who need tasks to be gradually built up or extension activities for more able learners. Learners receive detailed and accurate feedback on their progress towards their learning goals. Homework is an integral part of the course and is routinely assessed.

104. Learning resources are satisfactory in ESOL programmes. Paper-based learning resources are appropriate and of a good standard. Learners are encouraged to practice new skills at home using a range of learning materials provided by tutors. Teaching accommodation is satisfactory and the general accommodation is welcoming to learners. Courses run at times and venues suitable to the needs of learners. Programmes meet the needs of learners and the community with a strong focus towards employability. Support for learners is satisfactory. Tutors show knowledge and understanding of learners' strengths and weaknesses and support them accordingly.

105. ILT is insufficiently promoted to support independent learning. The use of computers is not routinely planned. Most lessons are based on project work. The use of computers to word process, access information from the internet or to use dedicated ESOL learning packages is insufficient.



## Leadership and management

106. Management of the provision is good. Strategic direction is good, with local plans that effectively implement national and local strategies. Clear lines of management and communication have now been established. Tutors are routinely sharing good practice through staff meetings. They are developing an active approach to teaching methods and strategies to develop learning to a high standard. Progression between levels is recorded and is used to develop programmes. Staff are well qualified. A strong professional development programme is linked to the development of the subject sector. The teaching and learning observation programme is closely linked to appraisal.
107. BCC has successfully widened participation. It has formed good partnerships with the community and plans to develop more links with employers. These links successfully promote equality and diversity and give learners good opportunities to develop their potential. Many learning activities promote cultural awareness effectively and most arrangements for courses show respect for learners' cultural and religious backgrounds. All staff have received suitable training in equality of opportunities and disability awareness. Information is widely disseminated through good lines of communication such as emails, internal memos and telephone. Data is routinely used to develop courses. Tutors are aware of how data is collected and continually check its validity at all levels. Staff made a useful contribution to the self-assessment report.
108. Recruitment has increased and more learners are able to access provision. Quality assurance is satisfactory. The ESOL curriculum leader routinely quality assures schemes of work, lesson plans and the quality of learners' work. The self-assessment report provides an accurate picture of the provision. More recent initiatives have led to improvements in the service.

## Independent learning and leisure skills

Inadequate: Grade 4

### Context

109. There are 442 learners with learning difficulties or disabilities enrolled on supported learning courses. Of these, 377 learners are working towards a pre-entry qualification and the remainder are following non-accredited learning programmes. BAES offers 51 supported learning courses in a range of craft based subjects, literacy and numeracy, ICT and independent living skills. Most courses run during the day at BAES's adult education centres or in community venues such as libraries or day centres. Courses usually run for 30 to 32 weeks. Thirty-two part-time tutors teach supported learning classes. Subject area curriculum leaders are responsible for the development of courses and teaching and learning managers arrange venues and tutors. Most learners have an initial interview with a learning support manager before joining a class.

### Strengths

- Good learner engagement and participation

### Areas for improvement

- Low success rates
- Insufficient initial assessment and planning to meet individual needs
- Narrow range of qualification and progression routes
- Insufficient curriculum development, management and monitoring

### Achievement and standards

110. Learners' engagement and participation is good. Learners concentrate on tasks and activities. Their behaviour in classes is good and they have respectful relationships with the tutor and other learners. Learners' development of new skills or knowledge is satisfactory overall. Learners in some classes show a good standard of work, for instance in flower arrangements and food preparation. In some sessions learners are developing confidence to use new equipment. Portfolios contain an appropriate selection of learners' work.

111. Success rates for accredited courses were low in 2005-06 at 32%, while on non-accredited programmes the achievement rate was a satisfactory 80%. However, the recording of progress is insufficiently effective to give confidence that achievement data for non-accredited courses is accurate. Success rates for learners from disadvantaged wards are below the average on all programmes. A quarter of learners who did not achieve in 2005-06 are continuing their qualification in the current year. Progress towards completion has improved. The

service recently recognised that errors and omissions in data collection and administration of the qualification contributed to poor performance.

### Quality of provision

112. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and broadly matches the findings of the service's observations of teaching and learning as highlighted in the self-assessment report. In the best sessions tutors use a good variety of multi-sensory approaches to develop learners' communication skills. They are aware of learners' strengths and build on these. These sessions are stimulating and tutors are skilled at encouraging learners to express choices and make decisions. In the poorer sessions there is too much focus on the practical task and insufficient emphasis on learning. Some tutors use terms that are too abstract or assume too high a level of knowledge in their learners. There is insufficient checking of understanding and little use of strategies to reinforce learning.
113. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Venues are accessible to learners with restricted mobility. There is an appropriate range of equipment and facilities for practical activities in most classes. IT facilities are available in most locations and are satisfactorily used to support discrete literacy and numeracy courses. There is little use of IT to stimulate literacy, numeracy and communication in computer and creative arts classes.
114. Initial assessment and planning to meet individual learning needs is insufficient. Initial assessment is not carried out systematically. Tutors are not familiar with the national pre-entry curriculum milestones and these criteria are not used to establish learners' strengths and areas for development. Targets in learning plans are not sufficiently specific and often do not link with the needs of learners or class activities. Many learning targets are the same for all learners. Others focus too much on completion of the qualification task rather than the personal skill or behaviour that individual learners need to develop or practise during the activity. Many session plans do not give sufficient consideration to the different needs and abilities of learners. Assessment and reviews of progress suffer from having no clear targets against which to measure progress. Reviews rarely indicate whether new skills are emerging, consolidated or established.
115. The range of qualification and progression opportunities is narrow. Over 90% of learners work towards the modular pre-entry level qualification. Once a module is completed most learners move on to the next subject module. There is insufficient consideration of how learners can maintain or build on their learning from one module to the next. Some learners demonstrate good abilities or an interest in a particular subject but there are too few opportunities for them to progress to a higher level. In some subjects the level of the qualification offered is inappropriate for the learners. For instance, a learner in one class has previously studied the same subject in an unsupported class. In another curriculum area, the skills that learners demonstrate are much higher than that required by the qualification.

## Leadership and management

116. Curriculum development, management and monitoring are insufficient. Since responsibility for supported learning was integrated with curriculum areas, there has been insufficient attention given to curriculum development and management responsibilities are unclear. The co-ordination of cover for staff or volunteers leaving the service or during illness is insufficient. There has been insufficient co-ordination of the moderation and administration of the qualification. Although individual areas and centres have links with a good network of residential homes and social service facilities, there has been insufficient liaison with care agencies and partners representing learners to establish a coherent curriculum that meets the needs of learners or communities. Quality assurance procedures have not identified significant weaknesses in the provision. There is little consistency in practice across the service and the observation of teaching and learning has failed to fully identify or adequately deal with areas for improvement. The observation of teaching and learning system has not improved quality or sufficiently supported the development of tutors. BCC has begun to look at participation issues to guide future strategic directions. Curriculum management have also recently made recommendations on what the core elements of a supported learning programme should be and have completed an audit of the skills of staff.

117. Staff development opportunities are satisfactory but too few tutors attend the training offered. Since 2005, 56% of tutors have not attended any of the training on offer. Tutors' subject qualifications and experience are satisfactory but too few have appropriate teaching qualifications or specialist training in learning difficulties. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory, particularly in classes where discussion of diversity and advocacy are a requirement of the qualification.

## Employability training

Good: Grade 2

### Context

118. BCC manages five projects aimed at increasing the employability of disadvantaged, unemployed adults, with particular emphasis on improving access to the job market by minority ethnic groups. Projects are jointly funded by the ESF and the local LSC. One project is specifically for people with disabilities, one for disaffected young people, and one is for jewellery designers wishing to become self-employed. Another project identifies specific skills gaps in the labour market and then trains unemployed people with these skills before job interviews. One project trains people specifically for construction skills to meet the demands of large new building developments in Birmingham. The total number of participants so far exceeds 800. There were 64 participants in training at the time of inspection.

### Strengths

- Very good achievement and progression rates
- Good training and skills development
- Highly effective matching of participants to jobs
- Good support and guidance
- Excellent partnership working to improve access to jobs by disadvantaged groups

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of initial assessment in planning programmes
- Weak target-setting and recording
- Incomplete implementation of quality improvement

### Achievement and standards

119. Achievement of qualifications is good. Since the start of the projects, 13 out of 15 participants achieved a level 3 business start-up NVQ. Seventy-eight young people have each achieved between four and seven Open College Network-accredited certificates, as well as health and safety, food hygiene, or welcome host certificates. Out of 500 adults, 488 have achieved non-accredited qualifications in subjects including construction skills. Twenty-nine people with disabilities have achieved non-accredited certificates.

120. Progression into jobs, education and training is good. For example, 432 adults have progressed to employment, mainly in construction. Fifteen out of 29 people with disabilities have progressed to supported full-time employment, and five to part-time employment. Ten out of 15 adults have now started their own business

in jewellery design or media work. A further 289 adults have progressed to further training, mainly in construction.

121. The development of participants' personal and practical skills is good. Participants improve their confidence, self-esteem, communication and team-working skills. They also develop a good range of practical skills in office work, construction, customer service, food service and business planning.

### Quality of provision

122. The standard of training and skills development is good. On Youthstart programmes, youth workers use imaginative approaches to challenging attitudes to diversity, gang culture and weapons. On self-employment and construction programmes, effective use is made of commercial and industrial experience to stimulate debate and enliven learning. Trainers use good demonstration techniques in plumbing. Employers' involvement in training prepares participants particularly well for specific jobs such as a croupier in a casino. Good use is made of ILT in some lessons. Handouts are professionally produced and appropriate to the needs of participants. In the weaker lessons, insufficient attention is paid to individual needs. Accommodation is old and cramped at some community venues, and at Youthstart, furniture is in poor repair. The new construction workshops are very conveniently located in a disadvantaged community venue, but are still in an unfinished state, with no lockers, sink or restroom for participants. The well-equipped jewellery design workshop is ideally-situated in the jewellery quarter of Birmingham, and participants have 24 hour access.
123. The matching of participants to employers is particularly good. Programmes meet the individual needs of participants well. Project staff are very active in anticipating new commercial and industrial developments where there is a shortage of job skills. Relevant customised training is arranged for participants, such as a specialist five-day course on logistics, vinyl floor-laying, bathroom fitting, or reception skills.
124. Employer engagement and partnership working are excellent. BCC works exceptionally well with strategic partners, local community organisations, employers, and support agencies. Employability projects contribute significantly to meeting local and national priorities for regeneration. Overall, the five projects have already placed over 450 adults into employment, and over 800 adults have received skills training. Two-thirds of participants are recruited from the most disadvantaged minority groups. Some participants are school refusers and ex-offenders. Much training is tailored to the specific business needs of the 400 employers involved, and is held at community venues or employers' premises.
125. Pastoral support and guidance is very good. Trainers use a wide range of interventions and external agencies to overcome participants' barriers to employment. Trainers and mentors are readily available to participants by telephone, e-mail and face-to-face and often accompany participants to appointments or interviews. Funds are used well for travel, interview clothes and starting up in business. Participants have regular and thorough progress reviews,

and attendance and punctuality are monitored closely on courses. Promotional literature is attractive and informative. Good careers guidance helps participants to make realistic job and training choices. Induction is satisfactory.

126. Initial assessment is not used well enough to plan job-related literacy and numeracy activities. There are no staff with literacy or numeracy qualifications and no on-site access to dyslexia screening. Initial assessment in relation to disability is good.
127. Target-setting is weak and not specific on most individual learning plans, but there is good assessment planning on the self-employment course. Some aspects of participants' progress are not recorded well enough. Participants' developments are not recorded systematically across all programmes. This includes development of personal and social skills, destinations and post-employment support.

#### Leadership and management

128. Operational management of projects is satisfactory. Teams meet regularly to disseminate information and share best practice. Staff development is satisfactory and linked to corporate needs. Health and safety is well-integrated with training and participants feel protected against bullying and harassment. Thorough risk assessments are conducted where necessary. Equality and diversity are promoted well to participants and learners understand their rights and responsibilities. Not all staff have had recent updating on equality and diversity.
129. Quality improvement is not systematic across projects, and not all programmes are consistently reviewed well. Feedback from stakeholders is sought and used to improve programmes but this is not always recorded. Monitoring of subcontractors is informal and supportive, but few records are kept of lesson observations. Self-assessment is not yet established in all projects, but where it is done, it is broadly accurate and many weaknesses identified are already being addressed.

## Business, administration and law

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

130. BCC provides 26 courses across 13 venues. Eighty-seven courses have run this year on which there have been 747 enrolments since September 2006, representing approximately 2% of the service's overall provision. Courses are mostly accredited and currently include word and text processing from entry level to level 3, on which 29% of learners are enrolled, book-keeping and accounts at level 1 with 11% of learners, computerised accounts at levels 1 and 2 with 37% of learners and administration level 1 with 17% of learners. The provider also offers one certificate in office practice level 1 course and one public speaking and presentation skills course. Of the current intake, 69% of learners are women, 9% have a disability, 37% are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 56% are from disadvantaged postcode areas. Courses take place during the day and evening and are taught by 17 part-time tutors who work for between two and nine hours a week. Tutors report to the five area teaching and learning managers. The curriculum leader directs and co-ordinates the provision.

### Strengths

- Good development of personal and vocational skills
- Good development and use of learning resources
- Good curriculum planning to develop the provision

### Areas for improvement

- Poor success rates on many courses
- Insufficient planning and monitoring of individual learning

### Achievement and standards

131. Learners gain confidence and develop good personal and vocational skills. Many learners gain benefits in their personal lives such as the ability to better manage their personal bank accounts and improved understanding of their personal taxation. Learners develop skills which enhance their employability, such as the use of specialist accounting software, double entry book-keeping and the preparation of a range of business documents. Learners on the public speaking courses develop their clarity and technique well. Attainment and the standard of learners' work are satisfactory.

132. Success rates on many courses are poor, particularly on text and word processing courses, although overall success rates have improved from 42% in 2004-05 to 47% in 2005-06. Success rates in 2005-06 for all word and text processing courses are 20%. However, overall retention is good and has



improved from 75% in 2004-05 to 86% in 2005-06. Overall achievement rates on accredited courses were low at 57% in 2004-05 and 55% in 2005-06. Achievement rates in the current year are good and show significant improvement. Achievement on non-accredited courses is good at 84% in 2005-06.

### Quality of provision

133. The development and use of learning resources is good, particularly in accounting and book-keeping courses. The recently appointed senior tutor has developed and shared with tutors a good range of learning resources and exemplar schemes of work and lesson plans. Tutors have good access to on-line awarding body learning materials. Learning centres are generally well equipped with modern computers and an appropriate range of software and peripheral equipment such as foot and wrist supports. Many classrooms have interactive whiteboards which tutors use effectively.
134. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Better lessons have a good range of activities and are well paced and structured with good interaction between learners. However, there is much variation in the quality of lesson plans and little planning for differentiated activities to meet particular learners' needs. Assessment is satisfactory. Tutors mark work promptly and provide good, detailed feedback verbally to learners to help them improve, but there is not always enough detail in written feedback.
135. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Adequate pre-course information is provided and learners receive a good induction booklet which helps them to settle well into their course. A booklet has been produced to provide guidance for learners on progression into employment or further learning and tutors provide some good information about professional qualifications.
136. Arrangements for support are satisfactory. Appropriate support such as adaptive technology is provided for learners with a disability. Learners are aware of the personal and learning support which they can access. Appropriate additional learning support is offered and provided where a need is identified, either through in-class learning support assistants or through discrete classes.
137. The planning and monitoring of individual learning is insufficient. Initial assessment of literacy, language and numeracy is not systematic across the provision. Learners complete their own general, and sometimes vocationally related, initial self-assessment. Insufficient use is made of the information gained from initial assessment to guide lesson planning and to develop personalised interim goals on individual learning plans. Few reviews are completed. However, as identified in the self-assessment report and in conjunction with the skills for life team, plans are in place to standardise initial assessment of literacy, numeracy and language skills from September 2007, with established support in classes where required.

## Leadership and management

138. Managers plan the curriculum well to develop the provision. Strong partnerships with schools, employers, voluntary organisations and community groups have been established. BAES is introducing accredited courses that are more work-related and not examination-based, to better suit nervous or reluctant learners and enhance their employability. The appointment of a curriculum leader in summer 2006 has much enhanced the vision, leadership, management and co-ordination of this sector subject area. Experienced and well-established teaching and learning managers work well with the curriculum leader to provide clear strategic direction. The appointment of a senior tutor in October 2006 has further strengthened the management team.
139. A range of recent initiatives for improvement have been implemented. Although action to improve the continued poor success rates has been slow, significant improvement can be seen in the current year. Actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning include support for tutors through mentoring by the senior tutor and the facilitation of a buddying system. The use of data and targets at management level to monitor performance is satisfactory, although tutors are not set targets. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced.
140. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory and learners and staff have an appropriate awareness. Participation rates from learners with a disability, from minority ethnic origins and from disadvantaged postcode areas are broadly representative of the population locally, although participation by men on programmes is low. Participation data is appropriately collected and monitored. Staff training is available in equality and diversity.
141. The self-assessment report is accurate. Managers are well aware of the issues and a development plan that is clearly linked to the self-assessment report is regularly monitored. Overall arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory.

## Family learning

Good: Grade 2

### Context

142. BCC provides family learning in partnership with 10 secondary schools, 100 primary schools, 25 early years settings and four community groups, as well as BAES, the main adult provider, and four further education colleges. The provision is specifically targeted at the most disadvantaged learners, living in areas of greatest deprivation. Eighty-two per cent of LSC-funded family learning is FLLN provision. In 2003-04 there were 340 adults on intensive courses. There were 807 in 2004-05 on intensive courses and 1,004 in 2005-06. The total number on all FLLN courses including keeping up with the children and play and language courses was 3,378 in 2004-05 and 3,217 in 2005. These shorter programmes familiarise parents and carers with literacy and numeracy taught at key stages 1, 2 and 3 and all are taught in schools. Wider family learning courses are provided in a range of subject areas. Currently, 472 learners are on programme.

143. A full-time head of family learning, who reports to a principal adviser in school effectiveness, leads the service with one full-time and one fractional adviser. Two teachers are seconded as mentors from schools and one mentor is seconded from an external organisation. Tutors are employed by the partner organisations.

### Strengths

- Good achievements
- Highly effective teaching and learning
- Good curriculum management
- Very effective partnership working

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of individual learning plans to support learning

### Achievement and standards

144. Achievements are good. The skill levels of adults and children are assessed at the beginning of each course. In 2005-06, 60% of adults improved their skill levels by the end of the course. Similarly, in 2004-05, 64% of children improved their skill levels by at least one grade on national aptitude tests and 74% achieved this outcome in 2005-06. The proportion of learners achieving external accreditation has increased from 18% in 2004-05 to 25% in 2005-06 and 37.5% to date in 2006-07, compared with the national target of 25%. Learners make significant gains in confidence and are able to support their children's learning. Good verbal skills are developed. There is good peer support within groups. Attendance is good.

145. In most schools, photographs of family learning activities are prominently displayed in corridors and reception areas. Gains in attainment are experienced by learners and by their children, which significantly affects their attitudes to learning.

#### Quality of provision

146. Teaching and learning are highly effective. There are high levels of learner participation from both adults and children. A wide range of teaching methods is used to motivate learners and maintain their interest. Learning objectives are clear and learning is fun. Teachers effectively model positive feedback to children which is then practised by parents to maximise learning. Teachers and learners have good working relationships. Staff effectively establish a shared culture of purposeful learning. Learners provide effective peer support, often praising other learners' work. In many lessons, innovative teaching methods are used to engage learners. Joint lesson planning between family learning and school staff is good, and ensures synergy between topics relevant to children's key stages and the information needed by parents to support this learning. However, in a few lessons observed the more able learners were not challenged enough and a few learners completed tasks quickly, and then sat waiting for others to finish.

147. Teaching resources are good. Each learner is given a learning bag which contains stationery, a dictionary or numeracy book and learning materials to support their children's acquisition of concepts. Learning resources effectively promote diversity, using images of people of different nationalities, ages and gender and including some with disabilities. Cultural differences are celebrated. Teaching environments are satisfactory.

148. Not enough use is made of individual learning plans to guide learning. Initial assessment is not always used effectively to support the creation of individual learning plans. Individual learning plans are formulated, sometimes several weeks into courses, but they are not used consistently to plan learning. In some lessons, they are available in the teachers' course file and little reference is made to them. Some teachers are not recording learners' progress during lessons as evidence for reviews.

149. The provision meets the needs and interests of learners well. Most learners' aspirations have been effectively met and the wide range of provision meets local needs. Visits to local facilities such as libraries are integrated with courses, enriching learners' experiences.

150. Advice and guidance is satisfactory. Progression routes into other learning opportunities are good. For example, two learners have progressed into access provision and then obtained degrees at university. Some learners have progressed into voluntary work or paid employment, particularly in child-related jobs.

## Leadership and management

151. Curriculum management is good. Performance is monitored well against clearly articulated criteria. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate. Teachers are well supported. Communication is good and meetings are used productively to share good practice and plan improvements. Teaching and learning observations have been completed systematically and accord accurately with inspection judgements. There is a significant management commitment to improving quality which has had a positive effect on teaching and learning. Staff are highly motivated and well qualified. Appropriate staff training has been developed, focused on topics identified as areas for improvement in the self-assessment report.
152. There is highly effective partnership working which supports the recruitment of hard to reach learners. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff from a wide range of external agencies work together to identify and disseminate good practice. Head teachers are very supportive of the provision, which is established most effectively in the schools. Some innovative approaches have been used to engage learners from under-represented groups. For example, in one of the extended schools, parents are employed as parent link workers. They engage with parents, using their common interest in their children's progress, and support them to become involved in learning.