

# Tameside Metropolitan Borough 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 Tameside Adult Learning Service (TALS) specialist provision in:

- Information and communication technology (ICT)
- Preparation for work and life

The Council's provision in Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) programmes and professional development programmes for school support staff were also inspected but not graded. The findings from these areas were used to inform judgements for key questions and leadership and management.

## Description of the provider

1. Tameside local authority area is situated seven miles east of Manchester. The Metropolitan Borough Council takes its name from the river Tame which links the nine towns of the borough. The borough's service sector continues to grow and service industries are now the largest employment sector. In the recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment, the borough was designated as an Excellent Council and judged to be improving strongly. About 62% of the 213,700 residents in Tameside (2001 census), are of working age. The proportion of the local population from minority ethnic groups is 5.4%, with the largest groups from Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi origins.
2. Literacy levels are low with 69% of working age adults with literacy skills below level 2, compared with 54% across England. Currently 50% of residents have level 1 literacy skills only. Numeracy levels are low and 87% of residents have skills below level 2, compared with 75% nationally. Around 63% of adults have entry level skills only compared with 46% across England. A high number of residents possess no qualifications.
3. The provision aims to ensure that all adults have the opportunity to continue learning and training. A key measure is to reduce the numbers with poor literacy, numeracy, and ICT skills. Tameside Adult Learning Services (TALS) offers courses for adults in family learning, skills for life, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), ICT and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In 2005/06 there were 495 learners. The service prioritises people with low level or no qualifications, those not in work or in low-paid employment and those who find it difficult to participate in learning. Courses take place in a variety of community venues. The Greater Manchester LSC contributes about £1 million to adult learning in Tameside.
4. The NLDC programme targets priority areas identified in the borough's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. The programme is managed by a regeneration officer assisted by a skills broker and four Community Learning Champions. Learning projects are developed after consultation with residents, voluntary and community groups and employers. A resident-led grants panel allocates small grants for equipment, crèche facilities and teaching. Courses are taught through the two local colleges and the adult service. In 2005/06 NLDC supported 42 projects, with over 800 learners, mostly homeless people, jobseekers or potential voluntary and community workers.
5. The Support Staff Development Centre provides professional development opportunities for support staff from Tameside's 99 schools. The centre provides approved teaching assistants' induction training at level 1, Support Work in Schools (SWIS) accreditation at level 2, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3 for teaching assistants, and the Higher Level Teaching Assistants NVQ level 4 award. Currently 13 learners are working towards SWIS awards, 64 learners towards NVQ levels 2 and 3 teaching assistant awards, and eight towards NVQ level 4 Higher Level Teaching Award.

## Summary of grades awarded

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

## Sector subject areas

Information and communications technology	Good: grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: grade 3

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. In adult and community learning (ACL), achievement on accredited provision is high especially in literacy and numeracy, ICT and for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are good achievements of NVOs by school support staff. ESOL success rates have been low but are improving. Many learners gain in confidence and apply their learning to real life situations at home, with their children or in the community. NLDC learners gain good skills that help prepare them for employment. Many learners progress to higher level qualifications.
7. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Much of the teaching in ICT is good but of variable quality in preparation for life and work programmes. Most learners are encouraged by teachers to have high aspirations. Some learning resources are particularly good, but not all teachers use them effectively. Learning support assistants work well with teachers to give relevant support to individual learners. Not all teachers plan well to meet the specific needs of individual learners. They make insufficient use of the results of initial assessment to determine personal learning goals. Arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory.
8. The council's response to educational and social inclusion is good. Learners, parents, employers and the community benefit from successful partnerships. Partnership members accurately identify learners' needs and enhance learning opportunities, particularly for those who have not been in education or training for many years. The council successfully enrolls learners from minority ethnic backgrounds often using local community venues. The range and level of programmes offers good progression opportunities.
9. Guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Learners choose appropriate courses, programmes and progression routes based on relevant information. Support needs for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is identified particularly well.
10. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The council's strategy for raising the educational achievement of those with lower level qualifications and improving literacy and numeracy levels is having some success. The council's implementation of its skills for life strategy is satisfactory. Learners benefit considerably from successful partnerships. NLDC programmes are particularly successful in attracting new learners. Equality of opportunity is good. Arrangements for quality assurance and improvement are weak in the adult learning service. The use of data has improved since the previous inspection but it is not used effectively to set challenging targets for staff and learners' performance.

## Capacity to improve

### Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. Tameside MBC demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve. Since the previous inspection, some progress has been made. Learners' success rates have risen significantly and the grade for equality of opportunity has improved. Some weaknesses in leadership and management and in sector subject areas remain. Arrangements for quality assurance are inadequate. Arrangements for recording all stages of learning and the learners' experience are not systematic.
12. Arrangements for self-assessment are satisfactory and an appropriate range of evidence, including data on learner performance, is used to inform judgements. Staff and managers contribute well to the process and learners express their views through focus groups and annual surveys. Community partners are not asked to contribute to the self-assessment report. Inspection findings agreed with some of the strengths in the self-assessment report but identified additional areas for improvement.

## Key strengths

- High success rates
- Benefits to learners of the strong collaborative partnerships
- Targeting of provision to, and recruitment of, under-represented groups
- Strong culture of equality and its promotion to learners
- Quality of provision in NLDC programmes.

## Key areas for improvement

- Weak arrangements for quality improvement
- Setting and use of targets for improvement
- Better identification and mapping of learners' needs to individual learning goals and targets.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

13. Achievements and standards in ACL are good. Success rates for ICT learners are consistently high. Retention rates are generally high. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well on accredited programmes. Literacy and numeracy learners gain high passes in external tests. ESOL retention rates have been low but are improving. ICT learners are confident in manipulating data, are able to work independently, and develop good IT skills which they apply at home or in the community. In family learning many adults help their children with homework and gain a better understanding of the national curriculum. NLDC learners grow in confidence and gain skills that help them prepare effectively for employment or for prominent roles in their local community. Support staff in schools, successfully achieve NVQs, gain greater job satisfaction and enhance their prospects for promotion.

### Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Much of the teaching in ICT is good. NLDC participants learn skills that they can use for jobs or to contribute to the life of their local community. There are some particularly good resources to support learning but not all are used effectively. Learning support assistants offer good support to learners needing additional help. Not all teachers plan adequately to meet the diverse needs of individual learners. Learners' individual needs identified through initial assessment are not translated into personal learning goals. Some targets are insufficiently measurable or challenging. The quality assurance of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Observers make sound judgements about learning, and lesson observations are graded accurately.

15. Educational and social inclusion is good. The service is aimed at adults with low levels of basic skills and learners who are hard to reach. The service responds flexibly to the needs of individuals and employers. It works closely with partners to develop specific courses for groups such as asylum seekers, long-term unemployed, and learners with mental health issues. Classes are held in accessible community venues. Opportunities for accreditation and progression to higher levels are good. ICT programmes offer a good range of subjects, including building computers and digital photography. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop their creative skills through art and dance classes. The NLDC programme includes a wide range of short courses designed to help



learners develop community skills. The programme for support staff in schools is diverse and offers opportunities for accreditation at levels 2, 3 and 4.

16. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Tutors and a specialist advice worker give good advice and information about courses offered by the council or other providers. Good advice is given to school support staff and NLDC learners on opportunities for progression. Support for learners' individual needs is satisfactory. Learners needing additional language or literacy support are referred to the preparation for life team. There is a good attention to supporting the needs of individual learners on NLDC programmes through the provision of interpreters and special equipment.

## Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

17. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Tameside MBC's strategic vision gives a high priority to the development of a learning community and raising educational achievement and learning opportunities. Success rates in ACL have been raised. The priority in the 2006 annual plan for improving basic skills and ESOL provision is not carried forward into the 2007-10 plan. The Council has made satisfactory progress in implementing the revised strategy and action plan for Skills for Life.
18. The Council makes very good use of the expertise of partners to attract new learners and extend learning opportunities. These partnerships benefit learners and the wider community. Good collaborative work in NLDC projects with partner colleges and community groups contributes to community integration and social cohesion. Close links between the council and agencies such as the probation service and Age Concern help ensure a quick response to requests for new courses. The workforce development and family learning teams have strong links with schools.
19. Staff are appropriately trained and learners have a particularly good understanding of equality of opportunity and their rights and responsibilities. The service promotes a culture of respect for all. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive some particularly well-written information leaflets on how to make complaints and the learners' charter. These learners benefit from good support and a range of well used adaptive technologies. There is good access to all venues. There is no separate statement covering bullying and harassment and there is no group to monitor implementation. Learners' complaints are recorded and dealt with effectively.
20. Staff are appropriately qualified and accommodation and learning resources are generally of good quality. Programmes for staff development include how to

improve teaching and learning. The annual appraisal system is not used effectively to set targets for staff.

21. For the use of professional development for support staff, formal systems which recognise and record progress and achievement are under developed with poor record-keeping.
22. Quality assurance and improvement arrangements are poor for the adult learning provision but satisfactory in NLDC programmes. In ACL quality assurance activities are poorly planned and monitored. The quality monitoring group meets too infrequently to assess progress. There are no records of action taken to address areas for improvement following lesson observations. Arrangements for self-assessment are satisfactory although the report is insufficiently self-critical. Results from learner feedback questionnaires are used well.
23. The accuracy, range, availability and quality of data have improved substantially since the previous inspection. Data is collected on the ethnicity and gender of learners. Data is not used effectively by managers to set targets for quality improvement. Insufficient use is made of targets to improve quality. Targets for success rates for individual courses and for staff are insufficient. Targets for participation by under-represented groups were set and monitored for 2004 to 2006, but there are none for 2006/07. Targets and plans are used effectively in NLDC programmes. They are underdeveloped in programmes for support staff.

## What learners like:

- 'Meeting new people and making new friends'
- 'Friendly tutors who are very patient'
- 'Learning new skills'
- 'Being able to come to places close to home'
- 'That it's not like school'
- 'I might be able to win the photography competition now'
- 'People take what I do in the school more seriously now I have a qualification'
- 'The course gave me choices... I could see light at the end of the tunnel'
- 'Through the (NLDC) programmes I have become an active member of the committee and I can now speak in public'

## What learners think could improve:

- Access to computers
- The number of classes - they want more
- Being able to do work at home as well as in class – especially on the computer
- The ease of finding out about courses
- The level of advice on how to get into jobs

## Sector subject areas

### Information and communications technology

Good: Grade 2

#### Context

24. Currently 194 learners are enrolled on 40 courses held in 10 local learning centres, including community libraries, voluntary organisations and adult learning centres. Courses are taught by five full time and three part time staff. Just over two thirds of learners are women. Courses, including short tasters, are aimed mainly at beginners and offer opportunities to progress to level three for those wanting higher level qualifications. Learners are able to choose between subjects such as digital photography or buying and selling on the internet, to building computers and installing software, or gaining skills using popular office software.

#### Strengths

- High success rates
- Good development of ICT skills
- Good teaching and learning

#### Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently thorough initial assessment and setting of learner targets
- insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning

#### Achievement and standards

25. Success rates for learners on very short courses have been high for the past three years at over 93%. Success and retention rates for learners on long courses are consistently high. Learners on long courses have been retained and some have achieved early. Learners develop good IT skills and can confidently manipulate data and carry out basic functions such as printing, saving and creating new files. Family learners gain skills and confidence in using IT to help their children with home work. Learners' work is generally of a good standard. Learners are confident enough to try using some additional functions on their own and demonstrate in subsequent lessons. Many learners progress to higher level courses to broaden their skills and improve their employment prospects. Many of the learners on a digital photography course had started by attending basic IT courses in the Council. Attendance is satisfactory.

#### Quality of provision

26. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Classes are well planned and schemes of work are detailed. Learners understand and meet the learning objectives of each lesson. Tutors use a wide variety of teaching methods and are particularly good at breaking down lessons into discrete activities to maintain

learners' interest. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to demonstrate key points and activities such as editing text or changing the format of cells in spreadsheets. A wide range of supporting learning material is available and work sheets meet the diverse needs of learners. Learners receive informative and constructive feedback. Tutors evaluate each lesson and keep weekly records of progress including comments from learners. Learners and teachers have good relationships which promote effective learning. Learners are encouraged to sit correctly and safely at the computers and reminded when they do not. Detailed information is provided on safety matters in the practical computer building sessions.

27. The programme on offer is varied and offers a good choice of levels and venues. There is a good mix of subjects ranging from building computers to digital photography and office-based applications.
28. Initial assessment, setting of targets and individual learning plans are insufficiently detailed. Not all plans include details of learners' previous experience, training or skills. Short and long term learning goals are generally imprecise and difficult to measure, such as, "learn to use a computer" or "be able to use internet". Some learning plans have standard group targets and no individual goals, such as improving levels of confidence in using computer equipment or dexterity in using a mouse. The recognising and recording progress and achievement process is new and records are not sufficiently detailed.
29. Support to learners is satisfactory. Learners with additional learning needs value the help they receive from teachers. Teaching staff have a good understanding of the additional needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learners use adaptive equipment and specialised learning materials effectively.

#### Leadership and management

30. Leadership and programme management are satisfactory. Managers use data well to analyse course and tutor performance, but do not set targets for learner numbers or course completions. Staff appraisals are behind schedule. Monthly team meetings are held on different days to allow all staff to attend. The agenda includes opportunities to share good practice and a review of curriculum performance. There are strong links with local colleges, libraries and voluntary organisations. Learners who are hard to reach attend classes that are conveniently located.
31. Staff have a good knowledge of equality of opportunity and help learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities effectively during classes. Learners are aware of their own rights and responsibilities.
32. Staff were fully involved in the self-assessment report. The report is broadly accurate but it is insufficiently self-critical in judgements about quality assurance and improvement. It did not recognise the strength in teaching and learning. Teaching and learning is not monitored effectively. Few observations have been carried out in 2006-07. Recording of actions to improve teaching and learning are inadequate. However, prompt action is taken to address serious concerns.

## Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

33. Currently 210 learners attend preparation for life and work courses. Of these, 83 are men and 49 are from minority ethnic groups. Of the total, 107 are on programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This programme includes expressive arts, cookery, art, gardening, information technology (IT) and independent living. Currently there are 86 learners on literacy, numeracy and language skills courses and 17 are on family learning provision. These courses are available at pre-entry, entry level and up to level 2 in the national tests. Accreditation is available for all. Family learning is included in this programme. Most courses last between two and 46 weeks, although some last for two academic years to meet the requirements of accreditation. Most classes are held in two main centres, one of which is for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Skills for life learners attend one main centre, a community shop in the main shopping centre or a range of community venues. Tameside MBC works with several community and voluntary partners as well as schools, employers, day-care centres, hospitals and minority ethnic community groups.

### Strengths

- High success rates
- Good resources in teaching and learning
- Good response to community needs

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently rigorous planning for individual learning
- Inadequate quality assurance

### Achievement and standards

34. Success rates are high. Success rates are high for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and in national tests for literacy and numeracy at 86% in 2005/06. Success rates in ESOL are lower but improving, from 66% in 2004/05 to 69% in 2005/06. Retention is good at 91% in 2005/06 for all learners apart from those on ESOL courses where retention is satisfactory at 77%. Many learners develop good skills. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities gain confidence and increase communication skills as well as developing practical skills to use at home or work. Skills for Life learners develop their literacy and numeracy levels and self-esteem. ESOL learners develop good language skills in some courses.

## Quality of provision

35. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons teachers include a stimulating variety of learning activities, adopt a staged approach to the development of skills and reinforce learning effectively. In less effective lessons teachers take insufficient account of the different individual needs of learners. Lessons lack pace and rely too much on paper-based resources. Teaching and learning resources are good. The standard of accommodation at the main sites is good. Good use is made of a wide range of text books, games and activities. Specific fonts are used on handouts to increase readability. Internet-enabled computers are in place in all venues. Both main sites have interactive whiteboards. Learning support assistants are effectively used in most classes. Not all tutors make sufficient use of the full range of learning resources.
36. Individual learning is insufficiently planned. The results of initial assessment are not used to plan learning for individuals. Targets are not sufficiently time-bound or measurable and do not meet the needs of learners. Not all tutors understand the links between assessment, target-setting and review. Learning goals are often written in language understood by tutors not learners, and refer to group rather than individual targets. The system for recording and recognising progress and achievement is not used effectively.
37. The provision is particularly responsive to the varied needs of the community and employers. The information advice and guidance worker provides good advice to individuals and works flexibly with teachers to meet learners' needs. For example a new training-at-work programme was developed for Polish ESOL learners that focused on developing their language in a food production company. A number of courses take place in community venues for minority ethnic groups such as mosques. Family learning programmes include initiatives targeted at Bangladeshi fathers. Skills for Life staff have effectively partnerships with local hospitals, social services and day-care centres and offer literacy to learners with a range of mental health care issues. Learners with learning difficulties are working towards opening and running a community café to practise their skills. Family learning staff work effectively with schools, children's centres and Surestart to target vulnerable parents and children in deprived areas.
38. General support, information advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners have access to a good range of adaptive technologies. Support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are satisfactory in skills for life programmes. Informal guidance from tutors is good and some efforts are made to identify possible progression routes for learners.

## Leadership and management

39. Leadership and programme management are satisfactory. Family learning managers have effective meetings with staff from schools to ensure good planning of programmes. Communications and support for staff are satisfactory. Teachers meet regularly to share information and good practice. Staff training is good. The promotion of equality and diversity to learners is good. Initiatives to widen participation by under-represented groups are effective.

40. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate although some strengths are overstated. Quality assurance is inadequate. The number of management changes has adversely affected the programme and resulted in inefficient decision-making. Newly appointed managers have not been in place for long enough to address weaknesses. Although teachers respond well to the established needs of learners, the development of the programme is hampered by inadequate target-setting and action-planning. The cost-effectiveness of classes is not measured. Strategies for recruiting new staff or developing a new pool of tutors are immature. Actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning have not been fully implemented.



