

Wiltshire County Council

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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.

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), 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:

- Family learning

Description of the provider

1. Wiltshire County Council (WCC) receives funding from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide adult and community learning programmes. It is also the subcontractor for a local college which has a contract with the LSC for a Train to Gain programme. The adult and community learning provision is for family learning programmes and the subcontracted provision is for training teaching assistants.
2. Wiltshire County Council has 30 places subcontracted by Wiltshire College to deliver NVQ level 2 teaching assistant qualifications to LA employed teaching assistants across Wiltshire. To date, 18 learners have started the Train to Gain programme and are expected to complete by the end of July 2007. More learners have been inducted and are waiting to receive all the relevant paperwork before submitting the individualised learner records (ILR) for enrolment. These learners will complete in the next academic year.
3. The Train to Gain programme to train teaching assistants was inspected but not graded. This was because the course had only started recently and so there was no achievement data, there were no teaching sessions to observe and the qualification had not yet been finally approved by the awarding body.
4. Wiltshire County Council offers family literacy, language and numeracy courses and wider family learning programmes. On some courses, parents or carers work alongside children for part of the session. In others, adults work on their own, developing their knowledge and skills. Potential learners are attracted to these programmes through short tasters and family learning workshops. Courses are run across the county in a variety of locations including primary and secondary schools and community centres. In 2006-07 Wiltshire County Council had run courses in 62 local schools. Tasters, workshops and shorter courses of up to 12 hours are offered in subjects such as play and language, and food for fun. Learners with literacy or numeracy needs are encouraged to progress from these to the longer literacy, numeracy and language programmes lasting up to 36 hours. At the time of inspection in 2006-07, 1678 learners enrolled on family learning programmes of which 348 were men and 1330 were women. Of these, around 25% enrolled on longer family literacy and numeracy courses. The remainder enrolled on wider family learning programmes, some of which were funded through neighbourhood learning for deprived communities and some through personal and community development learning funds. At the time of the inspection, 18 courses were offered and 103 learners were on programmes.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject area

Family Learning	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievements and standards and the quality of provision are satisfactory. Provision in family learning is satisfactory. Leadership and management is good but equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

6. WCC has demonstrated that it has good capacity to improve. Since it was last inspected, progress has been made in putting into place the necessary procedures for the recognition and recording of progress and achievement. These procedures have yet to be fully implemented. A strategy for e-learning has been written and staff have been trained in the use of new hardware and software. The arrangements for quality improvement have improved and there is now a quality manager who has implemented new procedures which are now well established. The quality cycle is well illustrated by means of a useful flowchart which shows how the subcontractors and partners action plans are linked to self-assessment and development planning. Registers have been developed as well as questionnaires to monitor learner feedback which can be matched to the common inspection framework. Targets are well monitored and feedback is given to partner providers on a monthly basis. Formal observations of teaching and learning now take place regularly but these need to be more focused on learning.
7. Tutor and learner handbooks are used widely and contain appropriate information about equality of opportunity and the complaints procedures. Additional support for learners has improved since the previous inspection and there have been strong initiatives to promote inclusion especially from local minority ethnic groups, men and learners from areas of deprivation.
8. The previous inspection judged that the provision lacked coherence and this is now much improved. There is very good communication between partner providers and good consultation to share good practice and avoid duplication. New appointments have been made to the family learning team and the provision now has a coherent strategy to plan ahead. Information, advice and guidance (IAG) has improved with greater focus on progression but still needs to be improved for higher level qualifications.

9. The self-assessment process is inclusive, well established and generally accurate. Good involvement of tutors and partners in the self-assessment process ensures a strong commitment to continuous improvement. Monitoring of action and development plans is effective. The development plan is realistic, knowledgeable and sets increasingly ambitious targets for improvement. It reflects a strong capacity to improve.

Key strengths

- Good development of self-confidence and personal skills
- Good learning materials to engage learners
- Wide ranging provision to meet learners' needs effectively
- Good planning and management of provision

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of individual learning needs to plan learning
- Insufficient information, advice and guidance for learners progressing from family literacy and numeracy courses

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. Wiltshire County Council achieves satisfactory success rates in national literacy and numeracy tests. In 2005-06, 54 of the 174 learners (31%), on family literacy, language and numeracy courses who were eligible to take the tests actually took the tests. The council set a target of 30% of these to achieve accreditation. A 94% success rate against its target was achieved and there were 50 passes achieved in literacy and numeracy. This year, the council has increased the numbers entering for national tests. Standards of work for those on family literacy, language and numeracy courses are satisfactory.
11. A significant number of learners enrol on to the wider non-accredited family learning programmes and taster workshops. These programmes successfully recruit the harder to reach learner and engage them in learning. Learners develop self-confidence and good personal skills such as team working and effective time management. They learn to work collaboratively, to plan and take part in projects and to produce effective materials and strategies to use with their own children or those in their care. Learners satisfactorily develop their knowledge of the preparation of healthy food for children, how to use language creatively during children's play and how to understand and assist with their children's literacy and numeracy work at school.
12. Retention rates for most family learning programmes are high and many learners progress from taster workshops to short courses.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

13. Courses and sessions are well planned. Tutors use a wide range of resources which engage learners' interests and promote learning. For example in a play and language class, children's toys and nursery rhymes were used effectively to promote and develop the use of language in their daily routines. In a Springboard Healthy Eating programme, effective use was made of seeds and containers to grow vegetables in addition to the tasks of preparing healthy food with children. Tutors make creative use of good quality learning materials to stimulate learning. Worksheets and handouts are clear, well produced and informative. Classes are held in community venues which are accessible and fit for purpose. These are thoroughly checked by the family learning team. Good use is also made of partner schools as venues for family learning.

14. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors use an effective range of methods and activities to cater for different learning styles. Learners participate well and enjoy their courses. Relationships are good and tutors confidently and quickly make learners feel at ease. Learners record sessional activities and monitor their progress through the use of learner journals. However, in many journals there is an insufficient focus on learning in relation to the personal learning goals set by the learner at the start of the programme. Some learner journals are incomplete and some contain uncorrected spelling mistakes. Final reviews of learning sometimes contain more comments about satisfaction with the programme than a review of progress against targets.
15. Arrangements for the initial assessment of learners' skills and knowledge are satisfactory in literacy, language and numeracy courses. A standardised assessment test is supplemented by a bespoke assessment which effectively suits the programme requirements. Realistic and challenging targets are set for learning, based on these assessments. On family learning taster courses, short, informal and often verbal initial assessments are carried out. These are generally fit for purpose and lead to the setting of group learning goals. On wider family learning programmes, initial assessment is often informal. The learning targets set are often insufficiently clear or challenging. Learning is insufficiently differentiated and learning goals are not always clearly established. Tutors' comments in learners' journals are sometimes insufficiently constructive.
16. A good range of well targeted provision is offered to meet learners' needs and interests. Courses are held in many geographical locations in the county and are centred on areas of high deprivation. Programmes are offered during the day, in the evenings and at weekends in venues accessible to learners such as community centres and schools. A creative range of topics is offered to attract the harder to reach learners and to increase their knowledge and awareness of working with their children. The council has taken care to focus on attracting those learners who are not currently engaged in learning. It has been successful in engaging a greater number of men and grandparents than in previous years. Courses have been provided for childminders, for travellers and for minority ethnic groups such as Bengali and Nepalese communities.
17. Learners are effectively supported with their literacy, numeracy and language needs. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to assist learners who identify any other additional learning needs. The family learning team does not have direct access to a wide range of specialist support but it takes satisfactory action to find appropriate support for learners when required. Learners are well supported with information to help them progress from taster workshops to other wider family learning programmes. Specialist information, advice and guidance for learners who may wish to progress from longer family literacy, language and numeracy courses is insufficient.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

18. Leadership and management are good. Since the previous inspection, the service has successfully managed considerable growth in learner numbers, increased the number of learners undertaking national literacy and numeracy qualifications and improved quality assurance, including significantly better collection and use of data. Good promotion has raised the profile of family learning across the county. Improvements are focused directly on improving the experience of the learner. The organisation of provision is now more coherent.
19. Strategic planning is well aligned to the provision of family learning to support local, regional and national priorities. The council's inclusion of family learning provision within the education department and specifically within the extended and community learning service is strategically important. It recognises the important contribution family learning makes to joint learning and outcomes for parents/carers and children. Good use is made of the extended schools team to effectively target and plan family learning provision. The service recognises the need for more coherent IAG across the county to support progression into further learning and/or employment.
20. Productive partnerships have been further strengthened and the service continues to provide a responsive pattern of provision across the county. There are now detailed formal service level agreements and contracts for all partners and co-financed provision. These provide clear arrangements for managing and monitoring the quality of provision including health and safety.
21. The recent appointment of a small, permanent, highly committed staff team provides stability and opportunities to develop more consistent practice. Good communication supports the development of a strong team ethos and working relationships are good. The tutors' and partners' newsletter provides useful information and celebrates success. Staff meetings focus on key priorities and provide good support for the relatively new team. Minutes of the meetings are clear but actions are not clearly identified alongside target dates for completion. Staff value the provision of support and training and its focus on helping them to improve the experience of the learner. All staff have access to a useful, informative virtual learning environment. This has been developed to support communication and ensure consistent practice across the wide geographical area.
22. Quality improvement is effective. Quality assurance systems have been improved and effectively support sustainable and continuous improvement. The process of observing teaching and learning is comprehensive and judgements are based on a good range of evidence. All staff, including partner tutors, are observed regularly and the moderation process is used effectively to ensure consistency. Inspectors agree with the council's overall assessment of teaching and learning

although some observations do not take enough account of the quality of learning. The process is used to highlight development needs. Performance management is satisfactory and there is good provision for staff development. Family learning has made a good response to Every Child Matters. All staff are checked by the criminal records bureau.

23. The collection and use of data has significantly improved. Data is reliable, accurate and used regularly to plan and evaluate provision. Increasingly challenging achievement targets are set. Recognising and recording progress and achievement is not yet used sufficiently to record and generate data about learning outcomes on non-accredited provision.
24. The course review process includes tutor and learner feedback. Tutor feedback forms provide a useful general overview of the course but these tend to be descriptive. Assessment of learners' progress and achievements are insufficiently self-critical. Feedback from learners confirms high satisfaction levels and a small telephone survey provides useful information about the range of skills learners gain.
25. The council has highlighted the need to improve adult basic skills within its community strategy. However, its response to this agenda is inadequate. It has not outlined a skills for life strategy and operational plan. Although the family learning programme provides satisfactory provision for literacy, numeracy and language, this work operates within a policy vacuum.
26. The management and deployment of resources is good. The accommodation used by the service is appropriate and there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified and appropriately experienced staff to deliver the programmes. The service provides welcoming and safe working environments. There is a clear focus on directing money to improve the quality of learning. Attendance is good in most courses.
27. Wiltshire County Council has a clearly stated equality and diversity policy which sets out principles to promote equality of opportunity and to celebrate diversity. The family learning programme works to the overall county council policy but also have their own statement to present a clear focus on family learning issues. The policy outlines the council's commitment to fair treatment for all learners, irrespective of their background. The service has a clear statement of the learner entitlement which details what learners can expect from WCC and what is expected from them. The complaints procedure is clearly stated and is workable. The service is sensitive to learners' needs and there is provision to meet learners' additional learning needs. For example, a visually impaired learner was provided with a classroom assistant to read for her and adapted equipment was provided for a learner with arthritis to enable her to access ICT.

28. The service has completed a number of projects to engage learners from minority ethnic groups. A course in puppet making and book making was run for local Nepalese families to encourage talking skills. Other courses have been run for local Moroccan and Bengali families. The courses were negotiated to take place in venues and at times convenient to learners. Particular effort has been made to engage those learners from the most deprived areas through the extended schools development officers and this is beginning to be successful.
29. However, there is little promotion of equality of opportunity within the actual courses. Equality of opportunity is rarely discussed with learners. Data is collated and used to inform management. Promotional material and documentation are available in languages other than English.

What learners like about:

- The course has improved my confidence
- It gives us time for ourselves
- I can spend some time with my older child while my younger one is in the crèche
- I can learn more about what my children learn at school and the way they learn
- Progression opportunities
- Professional recognition within the school
- The courses are free
- One to one assessment and feedback with tutorial opportunities readily available

What learners think could improve:

- Having other courses we can move on to
- Furniture in the infants school

