# Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

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| Inspection date | 8th June 2007 |

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| Inspection number | 301610 |

## Contents

# 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:

• Early years and playwork
• Information and communication technology (ICT)
• Hospitality and catering
• Languages, literature and culture
• Preparation for life and work including literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and entry to employment (E2E)
• Community development

Inspectors also examined evidence from other subject sector areas, which were not reported on separately, to support judgements on leadership and management.

# Description of the provider

1. Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) receives funding from the Greater Manchester LSC to provide work-based learning and adult and community learning (ACL). SMBC holds contracts to deliver further education, personal and community development learning, first steps, family learning, family literacy, language and numeracy, and neighbourhood learning in deprived communities. Contracts are also held for the delivery of work-based learning which includes apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship frameworks, E2E and Train to Gain programmes.

2. At the time of the inspection the council had 2,418 learners on courses in ACL. Of the 107 learners on work-based learning, 52 are on apprenticeship programmes, 16 on E2E and 39 on Train to Gain. Since August 2006 SMBC has had just over 4000 enrolments on ACL, 105 on apprenticeship programmes, 28 on E2E and 40 on Train to Gain.

3. SMBC provides courses in 13 of the 15 sector subject areas and family learning and community development. During this inspection, five sector subject areas and community development were inspected and graded.

4. Work-based learning and ACL is managed by the continuing education service (the service). It forms part of the inclusive and support communities section of the children and young people's directorate.

5. SMBC subcontracts provision to three local colleges, Aquinas College, Cheadle and Marple VI Form College and Stockport College. In 2005–06, subcontractors provided about 22% of the ACL provision.

6. SMBC provides learning programmes through a network of 40 centres, including secondary schools, colleges, council buildings, primary schools, youth centres and libraries. A wide ranging programme of vocational and non-vocational studies is offered. The SMBC continuing education service's mission is "to support and develop learning communities to promote economic well-being and social inclusion."

7. Stockport is one of the ten local authority districts in the Greater Manchester region in the Northwest of England. Stockport has a population of 281,000 of which 171,200 are of working age, and, of these, 149,800 are economically active. Unemployment accounts for 4% of the economically active population. In Stockport, 81.5% have qualifications at national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 1 and above, but 12.1% have no qualifications. Most economically active Stockport residents work in service industries. The 2001 census gives the minority ethnic population in Stockport as 4.3% compared with 7.9% nationally. In recent years there has been a growth in the number of migrants from the new European Union countries.

# Summary of grades awarded

| Effectiveness of provision | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| --- | --- |
| Adult and community learning | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Work-based learning | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |

| Capacity to improve | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| --- | --- |

| Achievement and standards | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| --- | --- |
| Adult and community learning | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Work-based learning | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |

| Quality of provision | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| --- | --- |
| Adult and community learning | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Work-based learning | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |

| Leadership and management | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| --- | --- |
| Adult and community learning | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Work-based learning | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |

| Equality of opportunity | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| --- | --- |

# Sector subject area

| Early years and playwork | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| --- | --- |

| Information and communication technology | Inadequate: Grade 4 |
| --- | --- |

| Hospitality and catering | Good: Grade 2 |
| --- | --- |

| Languages, literature and culture | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| --- | --- |

| Preparation for life and work including, literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages and entry to employment | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| --- | --- |

| Community development | Good: Grade 2 |
| --- | --- |

# Overall judgement

## Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning                 Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning                          Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

8.  The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. In ACL, retention and success rates on accredited programmes are high. In work-based learning, on apprenticeship frameworks, success rates in 2005-06 failed to reach the target levels of performance specified by the Greater Manchester LSC. In other provision, success and retention rates are at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Many learners gain in confidence and apply their learning effectively to real life situations.

9.  Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching and training resources to support learning are generally good, though some community venues are not well equipped with information learning technology (ILT). Assessment is satisfactory on accredited programmes, but less effective on non-accredited provision. The recognising and recording of learners' progress and achievement and initial assessment is weak on non-accredited programmes.

10. SMBC's response to social inclusion is good. There are good initiatives to engage with priority target groups. The service works particularly well to engage learners in the community and those defined as hard to reach. SMBC works well with its partners, both within the council and in Stockport to plan learning programmes and activities that benefit the communities and individuals.

11. Guidance and support are satisfactory overall. In work-based learning there are good arrangements for providing individual personal support, and reviewing learners' progress. In ACL, pre-course information is not always sufficiently detailed. Initial advice and guidance is satisfactory for learners on some programmes, but poor for some learners in community development, early years and playwork and ICT.

12. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Partnerships are used well to meet community needs. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. SMBC has a very effective focus on embedding skills for life within the curriculum and across the council. Quality improvement is satisfactory overall. However, the use of management information continues to be a key area for improvement. The service has yet to analyse this information to inform quality processes and set improvement targets.

Capacity to improve
Satisfactory: Grade 3

13. The service demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve. It has made satisfactory progress in effecting improvements since the previous inspection. Some developments have been hampered by a prolonged restructuring process. The current management model is proving to be more effective in providing a coherent management structure and better communication at all levels. In work-based learning, success rates in 2005-06 failed to reach the target levels of performance specified by Greater Manchester LSC. The contract has not been renewed in 2006-07. In other funded provision, success and retention rates are at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Most weaknesses in the previous inspection report have been addressed. However, the use of management information continues to be a key area for improvement. Management of subcontracted provision has improved. The service has yet to analyse the information provided by subcontractors, to inform quality processes and set improvement targets.

14. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. It is inclusive and consultative. A new quality framework, introduced in September 2006, is well defined, linked to reviewing key aspects of the learner experience and is accessible and understood by staff. Information that includes the views of participants in teaching and learning, management and key partners is used to inform quality processes. These processes were less well developed when the 2005-06 self-assessment report was prepared. The self-assessment grades mostly reflect the findings of the inspection team. The report is insufficiently self-critical and analytical, and in some curriculum areas it is too descriptive. It fails to sufficiently identify key strengths and areas for improvement in many aspects of the provision. The quality improvement plan does not consistently set clear measurable targets for improvement.

## Key strengths

- High success rates on accredited ACL programmes
- Good learning resources in many areas
- Well-balanced range of programmes
- Good staff training and development
- Good focus on *Every Child Matters* in curriculum self-assessment reports
- Very effective focus on embedding skills for life within the curriculum and across the council
- Good initiatives to engage with targeted priority and community groups

## Key areas for improvement

- Low success rates in some areas
- The need to increase the proportion of teaching and learning which is good or better
- The insufficient planning, monitoring and recording of individualised learning
- Initial advice and guidance

- The accuracy and use of management information
- The insufficient attention to attracting men into learning
- The insufficiently evaluative and critical self-assessment
- The further development of quality improvement procedures

# Main findings

## Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning          Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning                   Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

15. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The inspection findings did not agree with SMBC's self-assessment which judged achievements and standards to be good. In ACL, retention rates and success rates on accredited programmes are high. Success rates are particularly high on community interpreting and bi-lingual assistants languages courses, GCSE mathematics, horticulture, community development and the introduction to childminding practice course. On literacy, numeracy, ESOL and childcare courses there is good development of skills. In ICT, learners develop confidence and social skills. On non-accredited programmes, retention and success rates are satisfactory, although both declined slightly in 2005-06. Success rates are particularly high on digital camera and photography courses and woodworking. Retention and success rates on history courses and some leisure courses are low. On hospitality and catering courses, success rates are high in both ACL and work-based learning.

16. Success rates on apprenticeship programmes were satisfactory in 2004-05 but in 2005-06 were unsatisfactory. Overall success rates on apprenticeship programmes were 10% below the national rate. Learners' progress in early years apprenticeship programmes is slow and many do not achieve within the expected timescale. SMBC is no longer recruiting to apprenticeship or advanced apprenticeship programmes. Learners on the Train to Gain programme are making good progress and many are expected to complete their programme before their planned end date. Success rates on the E2E programme are satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning          Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning                   Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

17. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are broadly satisfactory. Inspectors did not agree with SMBC's self-assessment report which judged teaching and learning to be good. Systems to gauge the quality of teaching and learning and to drive forward improvements have been refined to include moderation. However, many lessons are overgraded. Observers do not always feed back areas for improvement that can be used as a basis for action-planning. Teaching and learning resources are generally good, though some venues are not well equipped with ILT. Assessment is satisfactory on accredited programmes, but less effective in non-accredited provision. In work-based learning, there is good assessment in hospitality and catering. There are good

arrangements to support learners with literacy, numeracy or language needs on work-based learning programmes. There are good mechanisms in place to identify additional learning needs for learners on accredited programmes. Where needs are identified, and the learner accepts support, good support is given. There is insufficiently rigorous and informative initial assessment on non-accredited programmes. It is insufficiently focused to determine meaningful, individualised, measurable targets that feed into individual learning plans or learning logs, and it does not adequately identify learners' needs. However, where needs are determined, good support is given, for example by scribes and interpreters. Systems to recognise and record progress and achievement are satisfactory overall, but poor in ICT and languages, literature and culture. Individual learning plans and learning logs are used developmentally in some cases, but some simply record what was covered in the lesson, and are not used well to plan and monitor learners' progress. There are too few effective techniques used to individualise learning on non-accredited programmes. There is poor target-setting on NVQ programmes in early years and playwork.

18. The provision satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of learners, although this was judged as being good by the provider. SMBC provides a good range of courses, with an appropriate balance of vocational and personal development programmes. Curriculum managers review their programmes each year to ensure they meet demand and address national and local priorities. The provision is flexibly organised. Courses are offered at 40 local community venues at times chosen to suit work patterns and the caring responsibilities of learners. Many community courses are devised in collaboration with partner organisations to meet specific local needs, for example courses in British Sign Language (BSL) for learners with deaf family members, and for parents and children on healthy eating. SMBC runs a specialist training centre for learners who wish to work in community development. In most subjects learners can progress from entry level to higher levels, or they can be guided to progression opportunities offered by other providers nearby. However, the geographical distribution of entry level ICT classes is insufficient, so some learners start on courses which are too advanced for them. Provision in work-based learning is narrower.

19. Inspectors agreed with SMBC's own judgement that guidance and support are satisfactory overall. In work-based learning arrangements for providing individual personal support, and reviewing learners' progress are good. On Train to Gain programmes in hospitality and catering, learners' induction is unsatisfactory. In ACL, initial advice and guidance is satisfactory for learners on some programmes, but poor for some learners in community development, early years and playwork and ICT. Pre-course information is not always sufficiently detailed to ensure that prospective learners can enrol on classes at the right level for them. Most tutors are very skilled in nurturing their learners and helping them to achieve and are able to give learners some information about progression routes available to them.

## Leadership and management
Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning         Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning                  Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity              Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

20. Inspectors agreed with SMBC's own judgement that leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff training and development is good. Participation in training has increased by over 50% from 2005-06 to 2006-07. Annual performance reviews identify the training needs of full-time staff. Development objectives identified through the observation of teaching and learning process and individual course assessments identify the developmental needs of part-time tutors. The service produces a termly staff development programme related to curriculum objectives, the results of quality reviews and the objectives of the children's and young people's directorate. Mandatory training such as equality and diversity and induction feature each term. Staff also have access to the council's training programme, which combines individual needs with corporate objectives. Tutors also benefit from individual training through coaching and mentoring arranged within their curriculum area.

21. The service's arrangements for implementing the five themes of *Every Child Matters* are good. The self-assessment report very effectively reviews the relationship between the themes and individual sector skill area approaches to their implementation.

22. The service has a very effective focus on embedding skills for life within the curriculum and across the council. A well defined and managed action plan has led to improvements. The service is working across the council, training its 7,000 strong workforce in the 'Go North West' local government skills for life award. Training to improve tutors' skills and understanding has been a key priority. Most volunteer staff have achieved the certificate in learning award.

23. Initiatives to engage with priority target groups are good. The service works particularly well to engage learners in the community and those defined as hard to reach in first steps learning, especially through community development activities. These help learners to gain the confidence to play greater roles in their local communities, identify training needs, and join courses to develop their literacy and numeracy skills through practical projects. The service works well with its partners, both within the council and in Stockport to plan learning programmes and activities that benefit the communities and individuals, avoid duplication of provision and provide value for money.

24. Strategic planning is satisfactory. The service contributes to and is included in the council's strategic plan. As part of the young people and children's directorate, it contributes well to the aims of the directorate's strategic plan, but is not explicitly represented in it.

25. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Communication is open and productive. The restructuring of the service in 2005-06 provides a more coherent management structure. Senior manages operate an open door policy. Staff are well informed and their opinions are valued. Good use is made of formal and informal communication. Meetings are scheduled well in advance to maximise attendance. Staff have access to an intranet, but some information is out of date and files are not easily accessible. In ICT and language, literature and culture, aspects of curriculum management are weak. The service records and responds to complaints as detailed in the council's policy on 'putting people first'. It reviews the types and frequency of complaints.

26. The service's approach to equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Good attention has been paid to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and plans include relocating provision that is currently inaccessible to learners with mobility difficulties. The service makes timely adjustments to meet learners' specific needs to ensure that they are not disadvantaged.

27. The quality assurance process and procedures are satisfactory. They have recently been revised and provide a more coherent measure of all aspects of the learners' experience. The service does not systematically collate and use the results of quality monitoring to inform management decisions and the self-assessment process. The service makes frequent and satisfactory use of feedback from learners, tutors and partner organisations to evaluate the quality of its provision, and regularly makes improvements in response to feedback. Management of subcontracted provision has improved. Subcontractors provide good information on recruitment, programme management, attendance, success and retention rates that meets their contractual obligations. The self-assessment process is inclusive. All service staff contribute to the review and evaluation of courses. Learners, tutors and partner organisations also participate in the self-assessment process.

28. The observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Tutors are observed at least once a year. Curriculum managers carry out observations of teachers within their team and all have had training in the process. An external consultant undertakes a moderation process through joint observations. The service acknowledges that further training is needed to ensure accuracy and consistency in identifying key strengths and areas of improvement, and in reporting these accurately to tutors.

29. The development of processes for recognising and recording progress and achievement is broadly satisfactory. Staff have received training in using the system. The quality is variable at curriculum level. Initial assessment is insufficiently objective in defining the learners' starting point in ICT and language, literature and culture courses. On some accredited programmes processes for recognising and recording progress and achievement are being implemented. Tutors often find that this duplicates information already collected and recorded on individual learning plans.

30. The service gives insufficient priority to promoting courses to males. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is similar to that of the local population, but the proportion of men who participate in learning programmes is low, at 23%. The service is aware of this priority target but fails to address it in the equality and diversity quality improvement plan.

31. The use of the management information system is inadequate. Much centrally held data is unreliable and staff find it difficult to understand and use, in the format in which it is produced. Reports are accessible to staff, but many are reluctant to use them and maintain their own data. This often conflicts with centrally held information.

32. Target-setting is weak. The quality improvement plan lacks clear targets to measure and evaluate progress. Other development plans, for example, the equality and diversity plan, do not use data to set improvement targets. The service has access to useful information, but does not use it sufficiently to provide headline targets to evaluate year on year performance and improvement.

## What learners like:

- Gaining confidence
- 'It's hard but I know I'm progressing'
- 'Feeling you've finally achieved something'
- The helpful tutors and the relaxed atmosphere
- 'I feel much more confident about speaking'
- The assignments are enjoyable and relevant
- Learning is fun and challenging

## What learners think could improve:

- The quality of pre-course information
- Some of the administration – 'We had some problems in getting our results and with changes to assessment dates'
- Wording on NVQ units could be simplified
- 'Providing a dishwasher and better organised equipment in the cupboard'
- Greater clarity about the requirements of courses

# Sector subject areas

## Early years and playwork

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

33. There are 378 learners on a range of programmes from entry level to level 3 in childcare, playwork, children's learning and teaching assistants. There are 22 learners on work-based learning in apprenticeship and E2E programmes. There are seven school pupils who attend a level 1 course for one day each week. There is a curriculum manager, two senior tutors, one full-time assessor and 17 part-time staff.

### Strengths

- High success rates on the introduction to childminding practice course
- Good skills development in the workplace
- Good use of a range of materials for teaching and learning
- Wide range of flexible programmes from entry to level 3

### Areas for improvement

- Slow progress by apprentices
- Ineffective advice and guidance for 16-19 year old learners
- Poor target-setting on NVQ programmes
- Inadequate use of data for quality improvement

### Achievement and standards

34. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Success rates are high on the introduction to childminding practice. In 2005-06, all 51 learners completed the programme successfully. Retention has also been consistently high.

35. The development of skills by adults in the workplace is good. Learners are confident. They demonstrate innovative and creative approaches when working with nursery children. Children respond very positively to these approaches. Learners are developing good social skills and respect for each other. Staff promote professionalism and respect. Learners display these qualities in their behaviour.

36. Apprentices make slow progress towards framework achievement. Learners are several months behind target dates for achievement, particularly in key skills. This area for improvement is recognised in the self-assessment report.

## Quality of provision

37. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The range of materials for teaching and learning are good. Trainers use a variety of well prepared, relevant learning materials. These support learners in exploring and clarifying their learning and understanding in logical steps. Lessons are generally well paced. This encourages consolidation and enjoyment of the subject. Attendance is good. In mixed ability groups, tutors fail to provide appropriate learning activities to meet the diverse needs and abilities of individuals.

38. SMBC provides a good range of programmes from entry level to level 3. Times of courses are flexibly arranged to meet the demands of learners and employers. Courses run on a Saturday morning and in school holidays in a good range of venues across the borough. New initiatives designed to respond to the 14-19 agenda in partnership with schools on vocational pathways are successful. The programme contributes well to national priorities in training all registered childminders to high standards and safeguarding children. It offers employment and vocational pathways for many adults.

39. Advice and guidance for learners on the apprenticeship programme is ineffective. Learners have been recruited to an inappropriate level of course. Some learners have struggled to achieve their learning outcomes. Staff have identified this significant issue and have been developing more suitable pathways to meet learners' needs.

40. Support for learners is satisfactory. Learners' additional needs are well provided for by tutors. For example, learners with dyslexia are given coloured paper that improves the readability of their notes. Learners with ESOL needs have support provided by additional tutors. Tutors provide good coaching support for learners.

41. Target-setting is poor on NVQ programmes. Targets are too broad and do not guide the learner sufficiently well through their programme of learning. This was a weakness in the previous inspection. The approach to assessment does not encourage learners to achieve unit accreditation in a timely fashion. Learners are making slow progress. Recognising and recording personal achievement is not well recorded in the individual learning plans, although assessors maintain detailed progress records. Staff have identified a need for electronic monitoring systems. Learners value the good professional discussions with assessors. There are now sufficient assessors to ensure that learners are benefiting from assessment opportunities.

42. Physical resources are satisfactory. Learners and staff make the best use of the accommodation. They create a welcoming environment for learners, with interesting displays of work which are then used to promote the curriculum. The Castle Centre has an electronic smart board; although staff have received appropriate training it has never been used.

## Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The use of data for quality improvement is inadequate. A new curriculum manager has been appointed with a clear remit for quality improvement. There has been insufficient staff development on the use of data to improve performance. Data from lesson observations is not used effectively, nor is data used effectively for target-setting for groups or analysing the performance of groups of learners. Inspection lesson observations do not reflect the profile in the self-assessment report and there has been some overgrading. There is good teamwork and staff are committed to raising standards. The development action plan is being well monitored by the new curriculum manager. Staff are addressing areas for development and undertake a good range of continuing professional development activity. Staff are consulted over the self-assessment report which identifies many of the areas for improvement but is not sufficiently evaluative. Internal verification is satisfactory with all assessors attending planned standardisation meetings. All assessors are now observed when undertaking assessment in the workplace as part of an annual cycle.

# Information and communications technology
## Inadequate: Grade 4

### Context

44. There are 127 learners on ACL courses and eight in work-based learning. SMBC provides 30 courses in using ICT. It employs eight part-time tutors and two full-time trainer assessors who teach in 10 community venues. It also provides apprenticeships in ICT for seven apprentices who are all employed and for one NVQ learner through Train to Gain. In ACL provision three courses currently lead to qualifications at levels 1 and 2. Non-accredited courses include 'build your own computer', 'family ICT' and 'be a computer hero to your kids'. Programmes aim to encourage learners to develop computing skills and increase confidence and motivation.

### Strengths

- Particularly good development of confidence and social skills
- Good range of resources to promote and enhance learning
- Good support for work-based learners to achieve key skills

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient initial advice and guidance for learners on non-accredited programmes
- Inadequate initial assessment
- Inadequate planning, monitoring and recording of learning
- Inadequate curriculum area management

### Achievement and standards

45. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Learners develop particularly good self-confidence and social skills. Most learners improve their confidence in using computers independently. Learners enjoy the opportunity to make new friends and develop friendships. Many are regular learners, either undertaking a number of courses or re-enrolling on a course. The small group sizes enable learners to quickly develop relationships with the tutor and their peers. Retention rates are good on both accredited and non-accredited provision. Some learners make slow progress towards achieving their learning goals. Success rates are showing a declining trend in both accredited and non-accredited ACL provision. In work-based learning, apprenticeship framework success rates in 2005-06 failed to reach the target levels of performance specified by the LSC. Learners currently on work-based learning programmes are making satisfactory progress.

## Quality of provision

46. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The range of resources to promote and enhance learning is good. Local residents have good access to programmes in community locations. SMBC focuses well on developing provision in disadvantaged parts of the community at times that learners find convenient. Most centres are warm and inviting. Learners from older age groups who have been out of education for many years are encouraged to consider enrolling.

47. Most learning environments are of good quality, but some classrooms are cramped. Much of the ICT equipment is up to industry specification, with some centres providing ergonomic keyboards and the latest version of specialist software. In lessons, there is an over reliance on the use of CD-ROMs and text books and very few learners are given real tasks that relate to their everyday lives to help them develop their basic skills and consolidate learning. Learners work at their own pace on applications such as word-processing, spreadsheets and databases. The use of group work is not well developed.

48. Learners on non-accredited ACL programmes have insufficient access to initial advice and guidance. Initial assessment is inadequate for these learners. There is no assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy or additional learning support needs. Much learning is provided in workshops, using CD-ROMs and text books. This requires the learners to have levels of literacy skill, which they do not necessarily possess.

49. The planning, monitoring and recording of learning is inadequate. Schemes of work and lesson plans fail to plan for the needs of individual learners. The setting of individual learning goals at the start of a learning programme is inconsistent. On accredited programmes, tutors rely on the learning outcomes of the course and do not take account of the personal learning goals of the learner. Monitoring and recording of learners' progress is inadequate. Many courses are provided in a workshop format using CD-ROMs and text books. There is a dependence on the use of the CD-ROM to record the learners' attainment, and the completion of their learning log. Tutors do not check learning systematically. Target-setting is inadequate, particularly the setting and agreeing of short-term learning goals. Progress reviews are often no more than a summary of learners' progress without any clear actions being agreed. Where actions are recorded, targets are not sufficiently precise. Goals during learning sessions are not clearly set and a learning log, which learners complete on attendance, is not well used. Informal discussions take place with learners about what they intend to cover in a session, but this is not recorded or checked. Many tutors do not record learners' progress in sufficient detail. They frequently record the tasks completed but not the knowledge and skills acquired. Assessments on some courses are primarily linked to accreditation schemes and learners do not get sufficient feedback on their progress.

50. Support for work-based learners to achieve key skills is good. Skills for life tutors teach key skills with the key skills tutor to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills. This team teaching ensures that learners receive good individual tuition and support as they work towards achieving their key skills.

## Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Curriculum management in ACL is inadequate. Following a period of restructuring, the curriculum area has not had a full-time curriculum manager. Management information is not analysed or used to inform planning. In a number of courses where learners cross academic years, there is no effective analysis of learner activity to inform programme planning. Only three of the 10 tutors have a teaching qualification. Those staff holding an assessor award have not updated their qualification to the new standard. Work-based learning is managed as a separate programme. In this area, the team benefits from regular team meetings, moderation and standardisation meetings and coherent planning for staff development. All staff hold relevant vocational qualifications and the current assessor's award.

52. Classroom observations of teaching and learning are insufficiently rigorous. They do not focus sufficiently on learning and attainment. The service's lesson observation grades are higher than those awarded by inspection.

53. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. There is an accommodation strategy which reviews venues, identifying issues such as non-compliance with legislation and sourcing alternative venues. Where a venue is inaccessible to a potential learner the course venue is changed to accommodate the learner. Community groups are consulted on local needs for learning venues and the type and range of provision required.

# Hospitality and catering

Good: Grade 2

## Context

54. SMBC provides hospitality and catering courses in ACL and work-based learning. At the time of inspection there were 100 learners, 54 on ACL, and 46 on work-based learning. The non-accredited provision includes day and evening classes in basic cookery, seasonal cookery and celebrations, and Asian cookery. These programmes normally run for two hours per week for 10 weeks. There are taster and short courses in healthy lunchboxes and healthy eating. Accredited provision includes food safety, offered to school caterers, Sure Start and work-based learners. Work-based learning includes NVQ level 2 courses in food processing and cooking for school meals staff, apprentices and E2E learners who take full qualifications or units. There is also provision for 14-16 year olds on alternative curriculum courses. In 2005-06 there were 56 non-accredited courses with 472 enrolments, 20 accredited courses with 181 enrolments, 33 E2E learners and seven apprentices. SMBC employs two full-time and one part-time members of staff who train, assess and verify work-based learning and five part-time staff who teach ACL courses.

## Strengths

- High success rates
- Good assessment in work-based learning
- Good emphasis on partnership working to improve community health and skills

## Areas for improvement

- Ineffective induction to work-based learning
- Inadequate management information

## Achievement and standards

55. Achievement and standards are good. There are high success rates in work-based learning. On the E2E NVQ level 2 in quick service success rates were 92% and 97% respectively over the last two years. Progress for many learners is rapid. Nine learners not due to complete until 2007-08 have completed early. Similarly, 24 learners on the NVQ in food processing and cooking have completed early and other learners are making good progress. Learners on Train to Gain programmes have completed their programme in four months, well before their planned end date. In ACL there are high success rates. On several short accredited courses in ACL everyone is successful. Learners demonstrate good practical skills.

## Quality of provision

56. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well paced and well managed. A good variety of teaching and learning activities engage learners well in theory lessons. Productive group work is used to apply theory to practice, for example, adapting dishes for healthy living. In ACL lessons there are effective written lesson evaluations with useful learner comments and tutor responses. Learners benefit from tutors and assessors sharing their experiences. The process for registering and recording progress is satisfactory on ACL courses although there is a reliance on learners self-assessing their performance against targets. Initial assessment in work-based learning is good, although some learners on the Train to Gain programmes do not receive literacy and numeracy support when they have been assessed as being in need of it. Apprentices benefit from a thorough effective initial assessment.

57. The assessment of work-based learning is good. It strikes a fair balance between the requirements of the vocational qualification and the needs of employers. It reduces the time required to complete the NVQ. Learners make good progress and the method of assessment minimises disruption to the employer's business. Assessors use evidence which occurs on an every day basis. They encourage learners to undertake a wide range of tasks, some of which may be beyond their usual job role. This enables learners to collect a wide range of evidence. Assessors effectively record responses to questions which test background knowledge. Workplace evidence is matched to units and elements by the assessors who also use their own high level craft skills to coach learners effectively. There are clear monitoring systems in place to monitor the progress of learners. A good computerised monitoring tool is used for effective monitoring of unit achievement. Individual learning plans are used effectively to set targets which encourage learners to make good progress.

58. The provision satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of learners. There is a good emphasis on partnership working to improve community health and skills. SMBC works with Sure Start and school catering services to provide accredited courses such as food hygiene and healthier school meals to develop the workforce. There are well established courses in school catering for learners with no qualification at level 2. The service works with primary care trusts and schools to offer healthy food courses. First step taster courses focus on economically disadvantaged areas. Accredited short courses are run to meet specific needs, for example to enable parents with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to prepare and cook vegetables.

59. Resources for learning are satisfactory. There is good provision of learning resources to meet the specific needs for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a mobile resource box of utensils which can be used at all centres. Appropriate arrangements are made to meet learners' specific needs such as recording recipes for blind learners and a height-adjustable stool.

60. The induction to work-based learning is ineffective. Some learners had no recollection of induction and others had a poor understanding of equality of opportunity. These learners had no awareness of how diversity issues might

affect them in their workplace or of their entitlements as learners. Induction covered the NVQ process but learners were not made fully aware of the arrangements for assessment in the workplace.

## Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There is good support for staff to undertake training. Many have obtained additional qualifications to support literacy to help them to teach integrated key skills. Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. Observation of learning is satisfactory. It does not always focus sufficiently on the quality of learning. There is insufficient identification of development needs following observations. Internal verification is satisfactory. There are regular and effective standardisation meetings. The self-assessment report does not identify appropriate strengths or areas for improvement. Progress against identified actions in the quality improvement plan is well monitored.

62. Management information is inadequate. There is insufficient analysis of the overall performance of learners on different programmes. Information on achievements for some groups of learners was not readily available. Changes have been made in the management of hospitality provision recently, with separate managers now responsible for ACL and work-based learning. Accommodation for practical catering courses is satisfactory. The recently refurbished training kitchen has a good standard of commercial catering equipment. ACL cookery courses are restricted to venues with appropriate facilities.

# Languages, literature and culture
Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Context

63. The service offers non-accredited foreign language courses at beginner and intermediate level in French, Italian, Russian and Spanish. A local further education college is subcontracted to provide non-accredited and accredited courses in the same languages, together with German and Japanese. Community interpreting, BSL, bilingual assistants, English GCSE and Welsh are also offered. Thirty-four learners currently attend accredited courses, from a total of 83 learners enrolled to date in 2006-07. Some 132 are enrolled on non-accredited programmes, with a total of 187 to date in the current year. Twelve hourly paid staff teach on the programme which runs at seven venues.

## Strengths

- High retention and success rates on accredited courses
- Good learning resources for accredited programmes
- Very effective targeting of accredited programmes to reach priority learners
- Good initial assessments for accredited programmes

## Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently developed process for measuring achievement on non-accredited programmes
- Insufficiently detailed pre-enrolment guidance for language learners
- Inadequate management information
- Insufficient management of modern foreign language programme

## Achievement and standards

64. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Retention and success rates on accredited courses are high. Success rates are particularly high on community interpreting and bilingual assistants' courses. In GCSE English, significant numbers of learners achieve high grades. Retention on most accredited courses is high and rising. On non-accredited programmes, retention is currently satisfactory but falling. Systems are not sufficiently developed to measure achievement on non-accredited courses. However, the standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Attendance on most courses is also satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

65. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching on accredited courses is carefully planned with clear outcomes for each lesson which are shared with learners. There are good learning resources on these courses. Resources are well chosen and effectively used. In GCSE English, teachers make good use of material from the internet and of different video versions of the Shakespeare set

text. Well-designed power point presentation projections in BSL courses help to overcome language barriers. Paper learning resources are clearly laid out and are visually attractive. Teachers on accredited courses use good quality games, cards and photographs. On non-accredited language courses some teaching is similarly good. However, a number of teachers do not use the process for registering and recording progress in non-accredited learning effectively. Many do not set sufficiently individualised targets for different learners within the lesson outcomes. Learner logs are not always well used. Tutors do not all yet understand how to measure the achievement of outcomes.

66. The provision satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of learners. Accredited programmes are very effectively targeted to reach priority learners. Community interpreting and bilingual assistants' courses are developed to meet community needs and located appropriately. GCSE English is targeted at learners from areas of high deprivation and supported by a GCSE preparatory course. The course is combined with literacy or dyslexia support where necessary and is taught by a literacy teacher. BSL courses are provided for learners with deaf family members and people working with deaf people. The service offers an appropriate programme of foreign language courses, concentrated on the most suitable venues. Progression routes are satisfactory. Learners seeking higher language levels are referred by agreement to accredited provision at a local college. However, course lengths for the same learning outcomes vary from 20 to 30 weeks without any clear rationale for the difference.

67. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Initial assessment for accredited courses is effective. Teachers of community interpreting courses adopt a very thorough process using clear criteria. Assessment and interview dates are well publicised. Assessment is of applicants' four language skills using materials contextualised to public service work. An efficient system refers people needing skills development to ESOL or literacy provision. GCSE English entry criteria are clear. They require learners to have achieved level 2 literacy or to have completed an introduction to GCSE course. However, pre-enrolment guidance for language learners is insufficiently detailed. The prospectus describes courses as being for beginners or at intermediate level, but it does not outline the skills needed for each level or their relation to national levels. There is no pre-enrolment self-assessment to help learners to enrol on the right course. Course detail leaflets are available on request but few learners use them before enrolling. A few tutors ignore the standardised course outcomes. Once enrolled, learners complete a self-assessment of their skills. However, few teachers carry out a thorough objective initial assessment to ensure that learners are on the right courses and to identify starting points from which to measure achievement.

Leadership and management

68. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The accredited programme is well managed. Most teachers are appropriately qualified. Most language tutors are native speakers but few have specialist language teaching qualifications. Accommodation is generally satisfactory. Management information is inadequate. Data is produced but is unreliable. Managers do not note inconsistencies or correct the data. It is not used to set targets for retention, success or attendance.

Managers have not acted to improve tutors' poor awareness of retention and attendance.

69. The foreign language programme is not sufficiently well managed. Arrangements for sickness cover are unsatisfactory. The process for registering and recording progress in non-accredited learning is not complete. No internal moderation system has been established.

70. Quality assurance is satisfactory. Observations of teaching and learning by curriculum specialists are increasingly rigorous. Reports are externally moderated and contain useful advice to observers. Teachers receive action points for improvement. However, these do not have completion dates and are not sufficiently followed up. Lessons are generally accurately graded although occasionally observers' lack of attention to poor retention and attendance leads to overgenerous grades. The self-assessment report is accurately graded. It identifies some strengths and areas for improvement but is not sufficiently evaluative. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Accredited courses meet priority learners' needs. The balance of men and women learners in language classes is good. Participation by minority ethnic groups and disabled learners is low.

# Preparation for life and work

## Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

71. There are 894 learners of whom 16 are enrolled on the E2E programme. ESOL courses have a full time curriculum manager and 14 part-time tutors. There are 290 learners enrolled on 32 courses running over five days a week in six centres. Additionally, 81 learners are on ESOL family learning schemes. Skills for life is provided by a full-time curriculum manager and a team with one full-time and 12 part-time tutors. There are 191 learners on literacy courses, 180 on numeracy courses, with 70 on the skills for life ICT option. Independent living skills is a discrete programme of 66 learners supported by 12 part-time staff. All of the courses are aimed at improving learners' skills from pre entry level to level 2. Courses are run in community centres, at voluntary organisations and adult learning centres and schools.

### Strengths

- Good development of language, literacy and numeracy skills
- Good social enrichment programme for independent living
- Good support for learners on E2E programme
- Good continuous professional development

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently detailed individual learning plans in ESOL
- Poor availability of ILT resources
- Insufficient use of data to inform curriculum management

### Achievement and standards

72. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Learners develop good language, literacy and numeracy skills. They develop confidence in speaking, reading, writing and understanding numerical concepts. Many learners develop their literacy skills through writing stories and contributing to newsletters. Learners gain confidence to take the numeracy and literacy national tests to further career and employment prospects. Achievement is satisfactory. In 2006-07, achievement rates for literacy and numeracy were 76% and 74% respectively. Learners on ESOL courses attain good levels of spoken English. In 2006-07, 67% of ESOL learners who entered for external accreditation passed. Learners are successfully progressing to higher level courses. One learner gained a level 1 qualification in numeracy and is preparing to sit level 2 to support an application to higher education. Retention is satisfactory. In 2006- 07, retention rates are 74% in literacy, 66% in numeracy and 79% for ESOL learners. Progress for E2E is satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory and work is of an appropriate standard.

## Quality of provision

73. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors plan and prepare lessons well. They incorporate a variety of learning activities to motivate and interest learners. Learners on E2E programmes have good opportunities for gaining employability skills, through a choice of vocational training and work placements. There is systematic recording of progress in literacy and numeracy sessions, which includes learners' comments on the progress they have made. Many records contain clear guidance and plans for further learning activities. Additional support is satisfactory and learners appreciate the support they receive from teaching staff.

74. The programme for independent living provides learners with good social enrichment opportunities through a choice of practical learning activities. Learners can choose to attend sessions on topics such as woodwork, cookery, and country dancing. Realistic individual and group targets are set to assist them to maintain and develop their skills. A student council enables learners to contribute their ideas for future courses and provide feedback to the curriculum manager.

75. E2E learners receive good support from tutors. There is good communication between learners and tutors often involving sensitive discussions. Good practical support assists learners to prepare for employment. Guidance and advice is given on appropriate behaviour and attitudes, and to improving employability skills. Practical help is provided on personal issues such as excessive drinking or substance abuse, relationships with peers and employers.

76. The provision satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of learners. Sessions are offered at flexible times to meet work and other commitments, for example workers in fast food outlets attend classes at less busy times. The range of venues is satisfactory and there is a good mix of course levels from pre entry to level 2.

77. Individual learning plans in ESOL are insufficiently detailed. Information in reviews of learners' progress is sometimes vague, with comments such as "carry on as before". Where progress has been made this is not clearly shown. Short and long-term learning goals are general with comments such as, "improve writing skills", or "improve use of punctuation". Some learning plans contain the same targets for all learners. The better learning plans are individualised and completed by the learner and the tutor. Learners diligently complete learning logs but most do not contain written assessment by the tutor of progress being made.

78. The availability of ILT resources is poor. Few of the training rooms have up to date computer equipment such as interactive whiteboards, media projectors or reliable computers to enhance the learning experience.

## Leadership and management

79. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a good focus on continuous professional development for staff. Senior tutors have a specific responsibility for parts of the provision. They lead course teams and disseminate new ideas. Developments are currently being undertaken to review and revise the

life skills and personal development curriculum. Staff meet regularly and meetings include both discussion and staff development activities. Staff have appropriate qualifications and experience. Volunteer support workers in literacy, numeracy and ESOL undertake the certificate for adult learner support.

80. Managers do not make sufficient use of data to inform curriculum performance or development. Data is not detailed enough to allow analysis of course performance by level, venue or tutor and it does not enable discussions at team meetings to make informed judgements about retention and success rates.

81. Staff are fully involved in the preparation of the self-assessment report. It is broadly accurate. However, it is not sufficiently self-critical in its judgements. It identified the areas for improvement relating to computer equipment and ESOL achievement. The report did not highlight issues with data or the poor quality of individual learning plans for ESOL learners.

## Community development
Good: Grade 2

### Context

82. At the time of the inspection there were 129 learners on community development programmes offered by SMBC's continuing education department. SMBC offers programmes which train people for careers in community development, as well as courses designed to meet the specific needs of local residents. Most of the latter provision is in priority areas identified as suffering deprivation. They include skills for life, cooking and food hygiene, ICT, arts and craft courses, and health related courses such as first aid and aromatherapy. Taster and first steps programmes are offered in most of these course areas. Both accredited and non-accredited programmes are available at a wide range of community venues. Altogether 29 venues have been used in the current year, including church halls, rooms in public houses and 18 community centres. Overall responsibility for community development lies with the head of social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal. Continuing education staff work closely with community development officers in determining learning needs and arranging provision. Many programmes, such as managing community events and desk top publishing, are offered to help people develop skills to address specific community needs. In 2005-06 there were a total of 1,043 learners, of whom 19% were men, and 3% were from minority ethnic groups. SMBC has provided community development programmes for 477 learners in the current year.

### Strengths

- High success rates on most courses
- Good use of community links to engage learners and to determine the course offer
- Innovative and successful provision for community development training
- Good facilities for learning in a large number of community venues
- Good partnerships

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient information, advice and guidance
- Weak quality assurance arrangements
- Insufficient use of data for target-setting and programme evaluation

### Achievement and standards

83. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates for learners on community programmes are high. In-year data supplied by the service shows that most programme areas have success rates above 70%, and for community language and retail courses, the rate is over 90%. The exception is ICT courses where success rates are low. However, these rates may improve as more learners complete their course. In many cases, courses are aimed at a specific community need, for example a group of learners develop craft skills which will enable them

to raise funds for their community activities. Many learners gain considerably in self-confidence through their work, and some go on to more advanced courses.

## Quality of provision

84. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers encourage learners to value and reflect on their own experience, and most classes are built around participation in a range of discussions and activities. Literacy and numeracy are assessed at the start, and support is offered in a sensitive manner where necessary. Learners' progress is regularly reviewed in one-to-one meetings with the course tutor, using SMBC's learning log book to record progress and set targets.

85. SMBC make considerable efforts to support the development of local communities. The continuing education department has a team of learning development officers whose job is to engage with residents in economically disadvantaged areas to determine their needs and encourage the take-up of learning. Courses are then planned and developed to meet specific identified needs. For example, provision has been made to teach parents with learning difficulties and/or disabilities how to care for their children's nutrition. This approach has improved the numbers enrolling on courses in these economically disadvantaged areas. The officers also link with staff from the council's social inclusion department to provide support through education and training for their community development work.

86. SMBC has developed successful and innovative provision for people who wish to work in community roles, for example as community wardens or rangers. This involves close collaboration between the social inclusion unit which manages the courses and the continuing education department, who carry out teaching and assessment. The centre has developed a range of programmes such as community safety and conflict management. In the current year there have so far been 79 enrolments with a success rate of 96%.

87. Most learners are well supported on community development courses. The service has wide ranging contacts to provide support for learners with additional needs or disabilities. Learners receive good support from their tutors. However, information, advice and guidance for new and prospective learners is lacking in many cases. SMBC plans to train tutors and learning development officers to provide information, advice and guidance as needed but they have not yet received training. Some learners enrol on courses which do not offer sufficient challenge and progression.

88. Facilities for community development courses are good. The provision of very local, small scale centres encourages participation by learners who would be reluctant to attend traditional learning institutions. Often SMBC funds improvements to the buildings, or to resources such as computer networks, thus enhancing community facilities. At one locality funding has been obtained for a new purpose-built community centre which provides excellent accommodation for classes and community events.

## Leadership and management

89. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There are good partnerships. SMBC works effectively with a wide range of partners. Managers attend the local learning and skills partnership, and its subcommittee on community development. It is involved at local level in many partnerships to enhance community learning, such as the financial capability project currently being developed with schools and parent support advisors. Other projects link with the alcohol and drugs service to provide computer training facilities at its centre, and with the Salvation Army, to create a learning facility. SMBC's departments work together effectively.

90. Quality assurance of community programmes is weak. There is no quality framework applied particularly to the community education provision. Instead, SMBC relies on the quality assurance arrangements of the curriculum teams. These do not differentiate between the community based courses and the rest of the provision. The parts of the process which are provided by community learning officers are not quality assured. There is insufficient monitoring of the outcomes of programmes for learners. The use of data is poor. Little analysis is carried out to determine which programmes or teachers produce the best results for learners. The range of programmes is growing, but in many cases there is no formal reporting on achievements and outcomes. The self-assessment report is generally accurate, but it makes no use of data to underpin judgements.