

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: London Borough of
Hammersmith and Fulham
Date of visit: 21 June 2007

Context

This monitoring visit follows the inspection in March 2006, at which the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham (the service) was graded as satisfactory for leadership and management and for its arrangements for quality improvement. The arrangements for equality of opportunity were graded as good. Provision was judged to be satisfactory in: information and communications technology (ICT); leisure, travel and tourism; arts, media and publishing; language, literature and culture, and in preparation for life and work. The service receives funding from London West Learning and Skills Council (LSC). There has been reduced funding from the LSC since the previous inspection. The recent council elections have seen a new administration in Hammersmith and Fulham with new priorities. The adult education service has moved to the community services department. There has been an internal restructuring. From September 2007, more work will be based in the community with fewer adult education centres. New external funding is used for projects linked to employment.

Achievement and standards

What actions have been taken to improve achievement and standards?	Reasonable progress
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The service has identified a range of strategies to improve achievements and standards since the previous inspection. An increasing range of performance data is available to support analysis and identify areas of under performance. There is a clearer distinction between accredited and non-accredited provision and the introduction of new qualifications is helping to better meet the needs of learners. Strategies to identify poor attendance are in place and overall attendance rates improved from 78% in 2004-05 to 82% in 2005-06. There is little difference between attendance rates on accredited and non-accredited programmes. Some improvements in initial assessment ensure more appropriate placement of learners on some courses. The service has identified the need to further develop systematic and timely initial assessment and to promote better take-up of additional learning support to raise achievement and standards.

Overall success rates are high and LSC data indicates an increase from 45% in 2004-05 to 90% in 2005-06. However, there are significant variations in pass rates across the provision. In 2005-06 there were a number of areas where pass rates were low. Overall retention improved on non-accredited and accredited courses in 2005-06. In-year data shows retention to have fallen slightly for accredited courses but is similar for non-accredited programmes. Currently there is no overall collation of achievement for non-accredited programmes. There is still insufficient clarity about how some performance data is presented. There is no clear differentiation between success rates and achievement to help staff focus on further raising success rates across all aspects of provision.

The quality of provision

At the previous inspection monitoring and assessment of progress and achievement was identified as a key challenge. How effectively has this been addressed?	Reasonable progress
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The service has made reasonable progress in the monitoring of assessment and achievement. The previous inspection found that individual learning plans were often generic and not always sympathetic to the needs of different areas of learning. Although they were in place for most courses, they were not always used appropriately to record progress and achievement. Work has been undertaken in a number of areas. In arts and crafts, new individual learning plans have been introduced to better reflect the specialist area of learning. This includes workshop journals and the use of digital photographs to support learner evaluation and to help learners acknowledge their own achievements. In childcare courses, a system for the completion of assignments has been developed to support more rigorous assessment and completion of assignments. In languages, a new assessment process in the target language supports better placement of learners. However, self-assessment has identified continuing weaknesses in the assessment of learning.

The service has a well established process to quality assure the individual planning of learning. The system for the observation of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection. Good practice is shared in team meetings, through newsletters and during peer observation. The self-assessment report indicates that staff increasingly understand the need to further improve the use of assessment information to support monitoring of progress and achievement. They also recognise that course evaluation is insufficiently critical. The quality of the content of individual learning records continues to differ considerably across the provision. There is little qualitative information in some learning plans with few comments about the development of knowledge and skills. The quality improvement plan for 2006-07 identifies the need to evaluate overall progress in recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning.

What steps have been taken to improve initial assessment and support for literacy and numeracy?	Insufficient progress
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There has been insufficient progress to improve initial assessment and support for literacy and numeracy. The previous inspection identified that there was insufficient use of initial assessment to plan learning. Individual target-setting was inadequate for skills for life learners. Progress to improve has been slow. There has been some re-structuring of the management of skills for life. Initial assessment practice has been improved and more closely linked to the process of planning individual learning. However, there is insufficient use of the results of initial assessment and the quality of target-setting is variable. The review process is insufficiently rigorous and some learning plans are poorly presented and difficult to read.

The service has improved information for learners about the provision of literacy and numeracy support and continues to develop integrated skills for life within some vocational programmes. Health and care staff understand the role of assessment and support for literacy and numeracy in raising standards. The service has taken steps to further improve support for literacy and numeracy and the overall quality of skills for life provision.

Leadership and management

What developments have taken place to improve the range of progression opportunities and to increase the number of courses which lead to qualifications?	Reasonable progress
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The service has made reasonable progress in improving the range of progression opportunities and the number of courses leading to accreditation. The previous inspection found that progression opportunities and courses leading to qualifications were inadequate to help learners access further training and employment. Clear progression routes have been clarified for all curriculum areas and a progression chart shows routes through to further education, ongoing training and employment. For example, in childcare, a large gap was identified in the present programme of courses between the skills for life course and the level 2 qualification. There is now a generic care qualification at entry level 3 and two related qualifications at level 1. These are designed to act as stepping stones to the level 2 qualification. There is also a new framework of qualifications for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This has been introduced to improve accredited outcomes and offer clear progression routes. A new café project offers practical opportunities, accreditation and a progression route to related level 1 qualifications. Most these new progression routes have only recently been introduced or are due to start in September.

Learners are actively encouraged to use the information, advice and guidance service. Training for staff and lecturers has raised awareness of the support available

for learners. In September, the service will offer lecturers the advice and guidance qualification at level 2.

What actions have been taken to improve the use of management information?	Reasonable progress
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The service has made reasonable progress in their use of management information to raise standards. This was judged to be insufficient at the previous inspection with most staff not adequately aware of the data in their area and how to use it to raise standards. Managers attended a data training day shortly after the inspection to identify what information they needed. The new, simplified information is being well-used by managers. The weekly take-up sheets enable immediate monitoring of enrolments, attendance and waiting lists for each class. The simplified termly performance reports enable managers to focus on key areas and use the information effectively to monitor and improve performance. Data is well-used in the termly presentations by curriculum managers at the recently introduced quality board. Managers self-assess their area and present their strengths and weaknesses to the other curriculum managers and head and assistant head of service. Data is a key part of these presentations. Although managers now understand data in their own area and use it to raise standards, it is still has not being used sufficiently by other staff members.

A recent learner satisfaction survey showed that minority ethnic groups were less satisfied than other groups. A focus group was set up to identify any areas for improvement. Another example is where data analysis identified that a high percentage of learners on qualification courses do not take the examination. A more stringent selection process has been introduced and, where appropriate, a similar, non-accredited course has also been run. Not all learners have reached their examination period.

What improvements have taken place in the system for observations of teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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The service has made reasonable progress in improving the system for observations of teaching and learning. Inconsistency in recording was identified in the previous inspection and there was no system to formally check the quality of observations, the accuracy of judgements or to ensure consistency across the curriculum areas. A more rigorous system has been introduced this year with an immediate response procedure for any unsatisfactory teaching. A new and comprehensive matrix of key activities linked to descriptors for grades ensures a greater consistency of judgements. The new recording paperwork is well designed and requires recording of judgements and grades for each of the activities. An overall grade is given. Each curriculum area records its own grades on a spreadsheet and identifies any patterns for areas of development. At present, this is not produced for an overall view of development across the service. A new, rigorous moderation process has recently

been implemented. The first moderation identified various issues with the judgements and grading and identified actions for improvement including inconsistency in how the overall grade is decided. There is still some poor recording on forms, and actions for improvement do not always include measurable targets. There is no formal system to review the effectiveness of these actions before the next planned observation.

How effectively have the self-assessment process and the development plan contributed to quality improvement?	Reasonable progress
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The self-assessment process is well-established and includes the views of staff and learners. However, in the 2005-06 report, the presentation of data is complex and does not sufficiently summarise overall performance. There is no clear differentiation between success and achievement rates to help staff focus on further raising success rates. The quality improvement plan is detailed and includes realistic targets, but some targets have not been achieved.

Changes have been made to the self-assessment process for 2007-08. The new quality board meets each term and reviews the strengths and weaknesses for each of the curriculum areas and grades them. The curriculum area judgements are collated into an overall view of the service which is wide ranging and includes judgements on how quality improvement plans have impacted on the learners. This ensures that self-assessment is now an ongoing process and quickly identifies areas for improvement.