

# Adult College for Rural East Sussex Reinspection

---

Adult Learning Inspectorate Inspection Report 5 May 2006

Reinspection date 17 May 2007

---

## Contents

Background information .....	3
Description of the provider .....	4
Overall effectiveness.....	4
Grades .....	5
About the reinspection.....	7
Leadership and management .....	8
Equality of opportunity .....	10
Quality improvement .....	11
Areas of learning .....	13
Leisure, travel and tourism.....	13
Languages, literature and culture .....	16
Preparation for life and work .....	19

## Background information

### Inspection judgements

#### Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An outstanding provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A good provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A satisfactory provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding
- grade 2 – good
- grade 3 – satisfactory
- grade 4 – inadequate

## Description of the provider

1. The Adult College for Rural East Sussex (ACRES) was established in August 2005. It was formed from a consortium of seven community colleges in East Sussex, to provide co-ordinated provision of adult and community learning in the area. The seven community colleges cover rural East Sussex and are in Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Ringmer, Robertsbridge, Uckfield and Wadhurst.
2. The managing board of ACRES consists of the principals of the seven community colleges and a representative of East Sussex County Council (the council). The executive manager of ACRES reports to the board. ACRES management team consists of the executive manager, the curriculum and quality manager and the business manager. The curriculum and quality manager is assisted by four part-time co-ordinators.
3. ACRES offers courses in all areas of learning with most of its provision in information and communication technology (ICT), arts and media; sports, leisure and recreation, and preparation for life and work. ACRES receives direct funding from the Sussex local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for personal and community development learning (PCDL) and some direct further education funding. ACRES pays for support services from the council including finance, human resources and a management information system.
4. At the time of the reinspection, ACRES had 1,098 learners enrolled in 12 areas of learning of whom 612 were enrolled on courses in the areas inspected and graded.

## Overall effectiveness

Reinspection Grade 3

5. The overall effectiveness of provision is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as are equality of opportunity and quality improvement. Provision is satisfactory in: sport, leisure and recreation; other languages, literature and culture; literacy and numeracy, and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Provision is weak in independent living and leisure skills.
6. The inspection team were broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process. The self-assessment process is inclusive and open. Staff and managers have a good understanding of the purpose of self-assessment. The current self-assessment report is accurate, detailed and critical. Inspectors awarded the same grades as those in the self-assessment report.
7. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements. Significant improvements have been made to the management and quality of provision since the previous inspection. Managers and most staff understand what further improvements need to be made. The college has a clear development plan and engages in good strategic decision-making.

## Grades

grade1= outstanding, grade 2= good, grade 3= satisfactory, grade 4= inadequate

### Grades awarded at previous inspection

Leadership and management		4
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		4
Quality improvement		4

Leisure, travel and tourism		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i>		4
Adult and community learning	361	4

Arts, media and publishing		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Dance</i>		
Adult and community learning	48	3
<i>Fine arts</i>		
Adult and community learning	167	3
<i>Crafts</i>		
Adult and community learning	91	3
<i>Media and communication</i>		
Adult and community learning	56	3

Languages, literature and culture		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Languages, literature and culture of the British Isles</i>		
Adult and community learning	30	4
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i>		
Adult and community learning	317	4

Preparation for life and work		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Literacy</i> Adult and community learning	71	4
<i>Numeracy</i> Adult and community learning	42	4
<i>ESOL</i> Adult and community learning	125	4
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i> Adult and community learning	7	4
<i>Independent living and leisure skills</i> Adult and community learning	544	4

## Grades awarded at reinspection

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		3

Leisure, travel and tourism		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i> Adult and community learning	113	3

Languages, literature and culture		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Languages, literature and culture of the British Isles</i> Adult and community learning	19	3
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i> Adult and community learning	152	3

Preparation for life and work		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ESOL</i> Adult and community learning	93	3
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i> Adult and community learning	113	3
<i>Independent living and leisure skills</i> Adult and community learning	122	4

## About the reinspection

8. Provision in sport, recreation and leisure, languages literature and culture, and preparation for life and work was reinspected, along with the leadership and management of the college. A team of eight inspectors made two visits to ACRES during 2007.

Number of inspectors	8
Number of inspection days	35
Number of learners interviewed	105
Number of staff interviewed	55
Number of employers interviewed	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	30
Number of visits to the provider	2

## Leadership and management

Grade 3

### Strengths

- Good strategic leadership and planning
- Very effective arrangements to improve teaching and learning

### Weaknesses

- Incomplete establishment of processes to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement
- Insufficient use of data to support improvement

9. Strategic leadership and planning is good. The previous inspection identified good strategic leadership and this has developed even further in the post-inspection period. The executive manager and board have made good progress in developing a coherent strategy for the college. The post inspection plan is thorough and covers all the key strengths and weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The board provides good strategic direction to the senior management team and closely monitors the effectiveness of actions taken to secure improvements and to develop the provision to meet community needs. Arrangements for curriculum management and planning have been strengthened and the quality of provision has improved in most curriculum areas. Management of organisational change has been purposeful and effective. ACRES has established consistent and coherent operational management across all sites with improvements to administrative functions, marketing and management information. A major restructuring has rationalised the management of the provision and the revised structure more closely reflects the college's commitment to quality improvement.

10. Curriculum management was a weakness at the previous inspection. It is now satisfactory overall and good on language programmes and in ESOL. It remains inadequate on programmes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. Experienced specialist curriculum co-ordinators have been appointed in most curriculum areas and provision in these areas has improved and is now satisfactory. Tutors now receive good support from curriculum specialists and are able to contribute to curriculum planning. The co-ordinators visit classes at the start of a course to monitor standards, identify staff development needs and support tutors. Many tutors are benefiting from well planned staff training and development workshops designed to address weaknesses identified through lesson observations. Provision in many curriculum areas has been rationalised to avoid duplication with other providers and to provide better progression opportunities for learners.

11. Internal communications are effective. The senior management team and the curriculum co-ordinators meet regularly. These meetings are an effective mechanism for monitoring consistency of practice and progress in implementing



the post-inspection action plan. Tutors are well supported through class visits and regular informal email and telephone contact. New staff receive an appropriate induction and a comprehensive tutor handbook that provides useful guidance and practical information. Tutors now have a better understanding of the changes taking place and of their need to update and improve their practice.

Communications to administrative staff based in community colleges is much improved. Regular visits from the office co-ordinator and weekly bulletins inform office staff of current activities and deadlines, and provide guidance on procedures that enable them to more effectively support tutors and learners.

12. Financial and resource management remain satisfactory. The business manager produces regular financial reports that are used well to manage the budget. ACRES has targeted additional funding well to meet the needs of disadvantaged communities and its priority groups. Accommodation and teaching and learning resources are generally satisfactory. Many staff have appropriate subject qualifications or significant professional experience. ACRES provides some support for tutors working towards teaching qualifications. There are insufficient specialist staff who are suitability for provision in ESOL and adults with learning difficulties and disabilities.
13. ACRES continues to give a high priority to staff development and training. It has an appropriate programme of general and specialist training that tutors now receive payment to attend. Managers receive regular appraisals. Class visits and lesson observations are now used effectively to monitor the tutor performance and identify staff development needs.
14. The college adequately manages literacy, numeracy and language support. For example, such support is now provided as an integral part of GCSE courses and if necessary learners are also referred to discrete literacy, numeracy and language provision. Skills for life staff provide advice and guidance to other curriculum areas. However, there is no systematic approach to the identification of support needs on most accredited programmes, with staff relying on learners declaring their own support needs.
15. Processes to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement are not fully established. This has been a priority during the past year and most tutors have now received appropriate training. However, the stages of the process are not applied consistently by tutors. For example, some tutors use initial assessment appropriately to assess learners starting points and plan their individual learning programmes, but others are not. Tutors set group and, in some cases, individual learning goals, but target-setting is not always effective. Some tutors are not monitoring well individual learners' achievement of their individual learners' goals. Tutors' judgements on achievement on non-accredited courses are not based on agreed criteria or supported by sufficient evidence. ACRES has not developed appropriate arrangements to internally moderate the recording of progress and achievement. ACRES has identified these weaknesses and is planning to rectify them.

## Equality of opportunity

## Contributory grade 3

16. Measures to ensure equality and recognise diversity are now satisfactory. The college has a comprehensive and clear range of policies and procedures in place that meet recent legislation requirements. These are shared with the local authority. Managers have also produced simplified versions of key guidelines and policies for colleges and learners.
17. ACRES provides appropriate support for learners. Learners are encouraged to declare learning difficulties and/or disabilities at enrolment and are offered the opportunity to discuss their needs by telephone or in person. Staff have received training in recognising and dealing with learners' needs. Learners' specialist equipment needs are resolved effectively before the start of their course. Most buildings used for central provision comply with disability discrimination legislation. However, some rural sites are not accessible to people with restricted mobility. Classes are quickly moved to accessible sites or rooms if a problem is identified. Overall strategies to identify and provide additional support for literacy, numeracy and language needs are satisfactory.
18. ACRES has a clear learners' charter and complaints procedure included in a useful learners' handbook. A comments, compliments and complaints form is also provided. The handbook, complaints process and learners' charter are dealt with at induction. Learners on independent living and leisure skills programmes are given a copy of a course-specific handbook appropriate to their needs. Managers effectively maintain a log of complaints and comments from learners. Clear timescales are set out and adhered to in the recording and investigation of complaints.
19. Learners across the provision are adequately aware of equality of opportunity issues and how to resolve them. Staff have received a satisfactory range of equality and diversity training since the previous inspection. There are measures in the class visit and lesson observation processes to ensure staff promote equality of opportunity effectively to learners. The tutors' handbook includes content relevant to these issues. ACRES administrative staff have also received training in information, advice and guidance that includes equality and diversity issues.
20. There are some good initiatives to attract learners from under-represented groups and communities. A learning broker, partly funded by the council, has made good contacts with minority faith groups, elderly residents, travellers and others. The learning broker and management team have developed provision to meet the needs of these groups. In sport, leisure and recreation, however, ACRES has done little to set targets to widen participation, particularly by men.

## Quality improvement

## Contributory grade 3

21. ACRES now has very effective arrangements to improve teaching and learning. This was a weakness at the previous inspection. The college has appropriately identified the observation of teaching and learning as a central quality improvement tool. The process is well designed and thorough. It includes detailed guidance for tutors and observers and a thorough moderation process to ensure consistency of grades. Paired observations have been carried out with an external consultant in most curriculum areas to give an objective view of the consistency of grades. The results are used effectively to identify staff development needs, for example, the need to improve the use of the target language and differentiation in language provision, and course and lesson planning, on ESOL programmes. Good practice observed in lessons is shared more systematically within teams. Tutors are given detailed feedback and clear action plans which are regularly monitored. Tutors receive good individual support and advice to help them improve their practice and can also be linked with more proficient staff. Tutors can identify improvements in their practice. Inspectors judged that weaknesses identified through internal lesson observations were rectified. Grades given by inspectors match those given during internal observations.
22. At the previous inspection, ACRES quality improvement arrangements were in development but had not been fully established. The quality improvement framework is now being implemented across the provision and the college has made good progress in resolving many of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The quality improvement policy and procedures are satisfactory and cover key aspects of the learner's experience. The tutors' handbook has useful information on key quality improvement documents and activities and most tutors are clear about their responsibilities. A calendar of quality assurance and improvement activities is in place for 2006-07 and quality improvement arrangements are now being used more consistently and monitored effectively in most curriculum areas. The college collects feedback from learners and tutors and identifies actions for improvement from the analysis. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory and meet awarding body requirements.
23. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. ACRES uses feedback collected throughout the year from learners and partners to develop the judgements in the report. However, tutors, partners and board members are not sufficiently involved in the self-assessment process. The latest report is critical and evaluative. It provides an accurate analysis of the college's strengths and weaknesses. It uses evidence well but does not yet have enough reliable historical data to make judgements about trends in achievement. The grades in the self-assessment report, match those given by inspectors.
24. There is insufficient use of data to support improvement. This was a weakness at the previous inspection. ACRES has worked well to set up more effective systems for collecting and monitoring data since 2006. Data is now being used more

effectively to monitor attendance and retention. The college has recently begun to receive reports that are better suited to its needs. However, these data reports are new and ACRES does not yet use them systematically to discuss and identify priorities or to plan action. Individual course reviews do not make sufficient use of information on enrolment, retention, achievement, learner feedback and teaching observations. Targets set in the development plan are not linked to individual staff targets. Tutors are not sufficiently aware of the targets for retention and achievement that are being set to raise standards.

## Areas of learning

### Leisure, travel and tourism

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i>		3
Adult and community learning	113	3

25. Sport and leisure classes represent 10% of the provision at ACRES. There are currently 113 learners enrolled on sport and leisure programmes. Of these, 112 learners are female, 47 are over age 65 and only one is from a minority ethnic group. There are 15 courses running during the daytime and in the evening at 10 venues including youth centres, village halls and community colleges. Classes include keep-fit, yoga and body toning. There is an overall curriculum co-ordinator and nine part-time tutors teaching between one and seven hours a week.

#### *Sport, leisure and recreation*

##### *Strengths*

- Good retention
- Good improvements to learners' confidence and health
- Good support for tutors

##### *Weaknesses*

- Incomplete health and safety arrangements
- Insufficient monitoring of progress towards individual learner goals

### Achievement and standards

26. Retention is good at 98%, and has improved from 91% in 2005-06. Twenty-five out of the 27 courses that ran in the spring term had 100% retention. Attendance has improved significantly since the previous inspection, rising to 80% in the current year from 72% in 2005-06.

27. Learners make good improvements to their confidence and health. In the better classes all learners are encouraged to perform in front of others to improve their confidence. Learners begin by performing the routines they have learnt for other groups before moving on to participate in more public performances. Learners develop a good understanding of movement and work well to learn new routines. Learners achieve general improvements to health such as increased mobility, strength, balance and vitality. This was identified as a strength during the previous inspection, and has been maintained. Learners display varying degrees of performance with some learners improving skills over a short period of time and others displaying poor technique. Some learners progress onto higher level

programmes where these are available, and those continuing to attend the same classes are given appropriately challenging activities.

### The quality of provision

28. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better sessions learners are given a wide range of appropriately challenging learning activities. The better sessions maintain the quality of individual coaching identified at the previous inspection. However, in some weaker sessions there is insufficient observation and correction of individual learner's performance to enhance and improve technique.
29. Accommodation is satisfactory. Learning sessions are generally held in spacious venues with adequate heating and ventilation. However, some rooms are cold. Many of the resources used by learners, such as beaded skirts in belly dancing, are provided by tutors, but in some sessions learners are required to bring their own basic equipment such as mats.
30. The range of programmes meets learners' needs. This was a weakness at the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. There is sufficient provision across the area covered by ACRES and there has been some recent market analysis to aid future planning. The college now has a clearer rationale for the courses on offer and aims to meet the health needs of the community that are not currently being catered for by other local providers.
31. Learners receive adequate advice and guidance and the enrolment process is now clear. Learners receive information through the course prospectus and there is also a comprehensive website with sufficient course information. There is now an attendance monitoring system in place which is used adequately.
32. Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of learners are incomplete. The pre-activity readiness questionnaire does not request information about the age of the participant or emergency contact details. Not all learners complete the form. Many learners disclose coronary heart disease risk factors but these are not routinely followed up and medical consent is not sought. Tutors do not hold current first aid qualifications, and there are no first-aiders present at outreach centres. At times, health and safety issues identified in class visits, and observations of teaching and learning, have not been clearly dealt with. Improvements have been made to health and safety since the previous inspection. Tutors have attended health and safety training and risk assessments are now in place for classroom activities. The curriculum co-ordinator has circulated some guidelines for safe exercise and tutors now have an adequate knowledge of current safe practices.
33. Monitoring of progress towards individual learning goals is insufficient. Learners are asked to identify individual learning goals, but these are unspecific, and clear targets are not set. This was identified as a weakness during the previous inspection. There is little measuring of fitness at the start of a programme and progress towards individual goals is not monitored. However, tutors do assess

learners' ability against group learning goals at the start and during programmes by using a graded ability record. Some tutors record detailed descriptions of progress towards group learning goals. There has been some significant progress with this since the previous inspection.

## Leadership and management

34. Support for tutors is good. Tutors are visited by the curriculum co-ordinator early in the programme to check that systems are in place and to offer support. Observations of teaching and learning are useful and used tutors to make improvements to their teaching. Tutors know where to go for help and have regular communication with the curriculum co-ordinator. The sharing of good practice now takes place and tutors are invited to participate in a peer observation scheme.
35. Overall, there has been satisfactory progress to address the areas for improvement identified during the previous inspection. The monitoring and recording of progress and achievement has improved in most classes. Sessions are now planned with consideration of the individual needs and abilities of learners. Tutors have attended health and safety training sessions and risk assessments are now in place. Tutors regularly update their professional competence. Learner views are collected regularly and these inform the self-assessment process. Tutors self-assess through a variety of methods including meetings with the curriculum co-ordinator. The observation of teaching and learning process has helped to bring about improvements to teaching and learning. However, the grading did not closely match the grades given during inspection. In some observation records there is too much emphasis on the importance of paperwork and insufficient emphasis upon learning.
36. Awareness of equality and diversity has improved since the previous inspection, and is now satisfactory. Tutors have attended equality and diversity training and learners are aware of their rights. New learners at well established classes are made welcome by tutors and other learners. However, there has been little progress towards the targeting of learners from marginalised groups, and there are no targets set to increase male participation.

## Languages, literature and culture

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Languages, literature and culture of the British Isles</i> Adult and community learning	19	3
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i> Adult and community learning	152	3

37. ACRES provides 33 non-accredited day and evening courses at 14 venues in French, Italian, Spanish, German, Polish and Mandarin Chinese. GCSE English and German, and a small programme of non-accredited sign language, English literature and creative writing, are also offered. There are currently 171 learners of whom 50 are men. The college employs 21 hourly paid tutors.

*Strengths*

- Very effective action to improve teaching and learning
- Good curriculum co-ordination

*Weaknesses*

- Ineffective use of initial assessment
- Ineffective systems to record achievement in non-accredited programmes

## Achievement and standards

38. Learners produce satisfactory work in language classes. They make particularly good progress with their listening skills. Their confidence in oral communication increases and they learn to risk making mistakes. Progress in reading and writing is also satisfactory.

39. Retention is satisfactory. Attendance is low in creative writing and on some language courses, particularly those where learners learn a language for holidays abroad. Few courses attain the attendance target set by ACRES.

## The quality of provision

40. Very effective action has taken place to improve teaching and learning. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory. Most tutors identify achievable targets for each lesson and share these with learners. The use of the taught language has increased considerably and learners' listening skills have improved. A good range of interesting activities, games and role-plays are used effectively. Some tutors provide very good learning materials including some produced on computer. These are not yet shared sufficiently with other tutors although a shared resource



base is in preparation. There is insufficient use of information learning technology.

41. ACRES provides a satisfactory range of language courses at different levels and covering a wide geographical area. More popular languages are offered in several centres and allow learners to progress through the levels. Less commonly taught languages, such as Polish and Mandarin Chinese, are located centrally to make them as accessible as possible from across the whole area. In the current year, the number of courses closed through low enrolment was very high. However, for the coming year, the provision has been planned centrally and rationalised to reduce closures. Beginners' language courses are to be offered mainly in the evenings. Higher level courses attracting older learners take place only during daytime hours. Course lengths have been standardised and unpopular accreditation discontinued.
42. Advice and guidance to learners is satisfactory. In the current year, different centres sometimes use different titles for the same level of course. Course titles for the coming year are now consistent and have clear descriptors to help learners choose the right course. Advice on progression routes is provided during the last course sessions. Appropriate arrangements are made for learners with disabilities to facilitate their participation in classes. Work is in progress on raising awareness of the effects of dyslexia on language learning.
43. Systems to record learners' progress in non-accredited courses are not sufficiently effective. Learners' initial assessment of their confidence is not always accompanied by an objective skills assessment by the tutor. The process does not adequately identify learners who need a different level of course or starting points to measure progress. Tutors do not all use initial assessment results to plan learning. In many courses, the targeted outcomes are the same for all learners. Tutors use a range of systems to record progress. On some non-accredited courses, tutors work to ensure learners reach the same level rather than encouraging individual progress. Criteria for the achievement of outcomes are not clear and the college does not yet have an internal moderation system for unaccredited achievement.

#### Leadership and management

44. Leadership and curriculum co-ordination have improved very significantly since the previous inspection and are now good. A well qualified and experienced languages co-ordinator is in post. The range of provision has been streamlined and course descriptions simplified. New systems for initial assessment and recording of progress and achievement have been introduced. Communications with tutors and centre staff are good. Tutors are consulted about changes to recording formats and are kept regularly informed about forthcoming events. These include tutor workshops to share good practice. The co-ordinator is readily accessible by telephone or email. Data is used well to identify trends and improve the provision.

45. Very effective actions have been taken since the previous inspection to improve teaching and learning. All tutors receive classroom observations by specialist language observers. They are given detailed, constructive feedback, and a clear action plan which is monitored for progress against identified areas for improvement. Classroom visits take place to ensure that all tutors have and use agreed systems. Individual support with teaching strategies is provided. A programme of appropriate specialist professional development events, addresses issues arising from classroom observations. Nearly half the tutors have attended the programme which is to be offered again at times accessible to the remainder of staff. The self-assessment report accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement. It is accompanied by a detailed action plan.
46. Most tutors are native speakers of the languages they teach and appropriately qualified. However, few have specialist language teaching qualifications. Most accommodation is satisfactory although many venues do not have sufficient access to ICT for teaching.
47. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Participation in the programme by members of minority ethnic groups is very low but reflects the profile of the local population. Half of the tutors have attended equality and diversity training but awareness among teachers of how to develop learners' understanding of equality is not consistent.

## Preparation for life and work

## Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ESOL</i> Adult and community learning	93	3 3
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i> Adult and community learning	113	3 3
<i>Independent living and leisure skills</i> Adult and community learning	122	4 4

48. Of the 328 learners in this area at the time of reinspection, 122 are on independent living and leisure skills courses. Most of these learners are enrolled on two or three courses, many of which take place in their residential homes. There are 93 learners on 30-week ESOL courses, most attending one two-hour session a week in term-time. The other 113 learners are on literacy and/or numeracy courses. Six of the 15 ESOL courses run in the evenings. In April 2007, ACRES set up a new intensive course for higher level learners. This course runs for one full day a week for 12 weeks.

49. Eight ESOL classes are taught by two of the nine tutors. The other seven tutors teach one class each. One tutor teaches five of the six numeracy courses. Four other tutors teach the literacy classes. The literacy and numeracy courses take place at seven venues with half of these provided in the evening. Eighteen sessional staff teach the 38 independent living and leisure skills courses in 20 locations. Fifteen of these courses lead to qualifications. Class sizes average about seven learners each. Nearly all literacy, language and numeracy learners are due to sit national tests and examinations in June 2007.

*ESOL**Strengths*

- Particularly good attendance
- Particularly effective improvement of teaching
- Good curriculum management

*Weaknesses*

- Insufficient checking of learners' understanding in many lessons
- Insufficient appropriately qualified staff

## Achievement and standards

50. Attendance rates are particularly good at approximately 80%. Learners are highly motivated and work well during lessons. Staff ensure learners understand the

importance of attendance to ensure continual progress. Learners are required to contact ACRES if attendance is not possible.

51. Learners attain satisfactory speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. In general learners develop an appropriate vocabulary and learn phrases useful to them in their daily life and work. Those who attend two or more lessons a week make particularly good progress. Some learners with very poor English skills at the start of their course make insufficient progress. Few learners have taken national tests or examinations in the past year.

#### The quality of provision

52. Most teaching and learning is at least satisfactory with some being good. Tutors have a very good understanding of learners' skills. They accurately assess these when learners start their course and monitor well their progress. Most learners are given appropriate homework to reinforce their learning and help them progress. The best lessons are characterised by good planning and a good range of teaching strategies and learning activities. However, although many tutors plan lesson activities well, they often pay insufficient attention to planning the specific language skills, learners need to develop. Tutors often do not give learners sufficient opportunity to practice new words and phrases, or to understand a grammatical point, before moving on to the next activity. Most tutors use learning resources and props well to support learning. These include tape recorders as well as items they supply themselves to help learners develop their skills. In some classrooms computers are available and are used well by tutors to aid learning.

#### Leadership and management

53. Curriculum management is good. Managers successfully addressed the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, and have implemented effective improvements. Tutors are supported well. Managers have developed team-working and some staff now share their ideas to improve the teaching of different topics. Managers have responded effectively to learners' requests for additional courses by, for example, establishing provision in Robertsbridge. In April 2007, to cater for new applicants, managers set up a new course comprising 12 weekly one-day learning sessions. ACRES has plans to analyse the effectiveness of this course model with a view to replicating it in the next academic year.

54. Measures to improve the quality of teaching are very effective. A thorough lesson observation session has been implemented and staff development has improved. Staff make good use of feedback to improve their planning and teaching. Some staff have developed their professional expertise through attending external courses in, for example, supporting dyslexic learners and skills for life. Most ESOL tutors have improved their understanding of the planning process and the planning of lessons now meets learners' needs. A co-ordinator grades some sessions. These match well the grades awarded by inspectors for observed learning sessions. Managers are aware of individual tutor's development needs and provided them with appropriate support to improve. Although none of the

tutors is fully qualified in ESOL teaching, two have started a level 4 subject specialist qualification.

55. Learners are generally taught in satisfactory accommodation. Some is very well equipped. Tutors' understanding and promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

56. Managers have not formally communicated with learners' employers to provide them with information on learners' progress, or of the government's expectation that they should contribute to the cost of teaching their employees.

57. Through the self-assessment process managers and staff identified the key weaknesses and strengths of the provision. The judgements in their most recent self-assessment report were broadly similar to those of the inspectors.

### *Literacy and numeracy*

#### *Strengths*

- Good achievement of external qualifications
- Effective actions to improve teaching and learning

#### *Weaknesses*

- Poor recording of learners' non-accredited achievement and progress

#### Achievement and standards

58. Achievement of external qualifications is good, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. In 2005-06, 97% of learners entered for qualifications achieved them. In 2006-07, most learners were entered for external qualifications. Final figures for pass rates were not available at the time of inspection.

59. Overall the standard of learners' work is satisfactory. In some sessions the standard is high, with learners completing challenging tasks. For example, in one observed session, numeracy learners were deducing patterns in Fibonacci numbers.

60. Attendance is now satisfactory. At the previous inspection attendance was poor overall. Processes are now in place to monitor attendance and there is a clear procedure to follow up non-attendance. Tutors are aware of reasons for learners' absence. The importance of regular attendance is stressed in the student handbook and in initial interviews. Management information on average attendance is available for tutors. This data shows that for the first two terms of 2005-06 average attendance was around the target figure of 85%. However, during inspection, attendance in observed sessions was poor at an average of only 67%.

61. Recording of learners' non-accredited achievement and progress is poor, a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report. There is no consistent approach among tutors to the standard and use of individual learning plans and progress reviews. In some sessions good targets are set and learners' progress and achievement is recorded in detail. Progress reviews are used to set new targets and individual learning plans are used effectively to record achievement and monitor progress. However, in weaker sessions, learning and progress is not systematically recorded. Learners keep learning diaries but these are often records of tasks completed rather than an evaluation of learning. In some sessions learning based on an assessment of learners' completion of practice papers. Targets are often set for the achievement of qualifications rather than overall progress.

### The quality of provision

62. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was identified. At the previous inspection tutors used an insufficient range of teaching and learning methods to meet individual learners' needs. However, tutors now use a wide range of teaching strategies and materials to meet the needs of learners. For example, learning activities are planned appropriately to meet the needs of learners at different levels. Lessons are well planned and learning outcomes are clearly stated. Learners are able to work in groups to achieve their personal learning goals. Targets are set in line with individual learners' needs and are used to plan learning. In some sessions accommodation and resources are poor. For example, at one venue the tutor had to work with a very small whiteboard and there is no access to ICT for learners at many venues.

63. Initial assessment is now satisfactory. All learners are initially assessed before joining a course. The results are given to tutors to plan learning and set targets. There are clear procedures to start the assessment process at initial interview. Assessment results are recorded clearly on individual learning plans. The numbers of learners receiving diagnostic assessment is increasing and all tutors have now received training on delivering diagnostic assessments.

64. The range of courses is satisfactory. Although only a small number of courses are currently provided in literacy and numeracy, they take place at an adequate range of venues, across a wide geographical area, to ensure adequate access by learners. All classes are mixed level and take place during the day and in the evening.

65. Learner support is satisfactory. Teaching assistants are used well in some classes. Tutors plan effectively the use of teaching assistants to ensure that learners are provided with the most appropriate support available at any one time.

### Leadership and management

66. Effective actions have been taken to improve teaching and learning. Weaknesses identified at the previous inspection around recognition and sharing of good practice, poor awareness of equality of opportunity, and an insufficient range of teaching and learning methods have all been rectified. A range of effective quality improvement measures is in place to support tutors including class visits, team meetings, peer observation, and observations of teaching and learning by subject specialists. The observation of teaching and learning process matched the findings of inspectors. For example, in one session, good practice was traced back directly to the overall action plan. All tutors have been observed since the previous inspection. Peer observation is used to support tutors and to share good practice. Good practice is also shared at team meetings. A range of subject specific training has been provided and tutors have been paid to attend. This includes training on dyslexia awareness, diagnostic assessment, new skills for life qualifications and equality and diversity. Of the six tutors teaching literacy and numeracy; three now have, or are working towards, the Level 4 subject specialist teaching qualification. Information, good practice and materials from the Better Teaching Partnership of the Basic Skills Agency have been shared with tutors.
67. Curriculum management is satisfactory. The skills for life manager post is currently vacant, but the curriculum and quality manager, who has skills for life experience, is covering the role. Six tutors teach the provision, five of whom teach one class a week. Communication is good and support is provided by telephone and email as well as during meetings.
68. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. This was a weakness at the previous inspection and has been rectified. Language in course outlines and in the learner handbook is generally too complex for the target-learner group. However, revised editions are planned for new courses for 2007-08. Several tutors have attended training on equality and diversity.
69. The self-assessment report is generally accurate. Most key strengths and weaknesses found during inspection were identified through the self-assessment process.

### *Independent living and leisure skills*

#### *Strengths*

- Good celebration of learners' work

#### *Weaknesses*

- Poor planning of learning to develop individual learners' skills
- Insufficient curriculum development to meet individual needs
- Inadequate curriculum leadership and management

### Achievement and standards

70. Retention, attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Punctuality was a weakness at the previous inspection. Learners on accredited courses achieve their qualifications. Current learners have portfolios of evidence and are on target to achieve their qualification. However, some learners are placed on inappropriate courses. Though they participate well in learning activities, there is insufficient evidence of the development of their skills. Attainment on non-accredited courses is not monitored thoroughly. The standard of performing arts learners' work is generally good. However, on a small number of courses, the standard of learners' work and the development of their skills is poor.

### The quality of provision

71. Celebration of learners' work is good, a strength identified at the previous inspection. An annual event is planned and organised by learners to celebrate achievement. For example, an art exhibition of learners' work was held, which was open to the public and reported in the press. Photographs of learners participating in activities are clearly displayed in classes at centres. DVDs of learners' performances have been recorded and distributed. Attendance at these events helps to improve learners' confidence in their skills.

72. Learner support is satisfactory. Support is provided for some accredited and non-accredited courses during class time. Tutors and learning support assistants have good working relationships with learners and work well together in sessions. Useful handbooks for support assistants and volunteers have been produced. Information, advice and guidance for learners is not fully developed. There is insufficient pre-course assessment of learners' individual needs and skills. Learners are not provided with enough information about the courses available.

73. Planning of learning is poor, a weakness identified at the previous inspection. New documentation and procedures for initial assessment, individual learning plans and lesson plans have recently been developed and are in the early stages of implementation. Most tutors have now been trained in their use. However, at the time of reinspection, initial assessments were not sufficiently comprehensive and targets on individual learning plans not sufficiently specific. The college lesson plan pro-forma has been improved to encourage staff to plan for individual learner's needs in sessions. This is not used well by all tutors. Sometimes all learners follow the same activity with insufficient planning of individual learning activities. The pace of some learning sessions is too slow. Some activities are not sufficiently challenging for learners. In some learning sessions, tutors do not provide enough activities such as group and individual learning. Support for learners' literacy and numeracy needs is not integrated within all subjects and there is insufficient use of ICT in some classes.

74. Insufficient curriculum development takes place to ensure learners' individual needs are met. The rationale for the current range of provision is unclear, though managers are currently planning to rectify this. At present there is not enough focus on developing learners' knowledge and skills. ACRES does not sufficiently monitor the destination of learners on leaving the provision. There is very little



integration of this provision with other adult learning provision and progression routes are not clear. Much of the provision takes place in residential care homes. Some learners continue on the same programme for too long. For some learners there is insufficient distinction between learning opportunities and leisure activities. A strategy document, outlining guiding principles to improve the curriculum, has recently been written with the support of a consultant.

## Leadership and management

75. Curriculum leadership and management are inadequate. Although much recent action has been taken to improve learning processes, ACRES has been slow to improve the provision overall. There is no curriculum leader yet in post and tutors and managers do not have sufficient specialist qualifications, knowledge or skills to work with learners with learning difficulties. Few staff hold a level 4 teaching qualification. Some do not have sufficient expertise in teaching and learning. However, relevant training is currently underway for a number of staff. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, systems introduced to monitor attendance and improve punctuality have been effective.
76. Observation of teaching and learning is carried out effectively and appropriate support is given to staff. However, some teaching and learning is inadequate. Observations are not carried out by staff with sufficient expertise in this area of learning. Some weaknesses identified in teaching and learning during the inspection were not identified by the provider.

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.