

London Borough of Hillingdon

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- adult and community learning in early years and playwork, arts, media and publishing, classical and modern foreign languages, literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, independent living and leisure skills and family learning

Description of the provider

1. London Borough of Hillingdon Council (the council) is contracted by London West Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide adult and community learning services to approximately 6,000 learners each year, most of whom live in Hillingdon and other surrounding London boroughs. Hillingdon adult education service (the service) is part of the council's planning and community services directorate. The service is a direct provider of adult and community learning funded through the LSC, with fees generated by learners and a range of other funds from local and national agencies. The service does not have any subcontracting arrangements. The provision includes accredited and non-accredited programmes. During 2005-06, there were 5,999 learners accounting for 10,586 enrolments on adult education courses across all sector subject areas. Most courses take place at six main centres and more than 60 community venues.
2. Hillingdon adult education is managed by the head of service who reports to the director of planning and community services. The service comprises seven departments, each of which is managed by a programme manager, supported by curriculum or tutor co-ordinators. The skills for life department has two programme managers who are responsible for skills for life and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. The management team includes seven programme managers, three centre managers, a senior finance officer, an information and statistics officer and a business support officer. The provision is delivered by approximately 235 part-time tutors.
3. Hillingdon is the most westerly of the London boroughs. The north of the borough is relatively prosperous with a workforce that comprises many commuters who work in other parts of London. The south of the borough is more culturally diverse with a workforce which is constantly changing due to the proximity of Heathrow airport. There are areas of significant deprivation in the south of Hillingdon. Almost 15% of the workforce is employed in transportation, storage and communication. The unemployment rate in the borough in November 2006 was 2.3%. This was lower than the national average of 2.5% and the London average of 3.2%. According to the 2001 census, 20.9% of the borough's population is from minority ethnic groups, compared with 9.1% of the population nationally.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject area

Early years and playwork	Outstanding: Grade 1
Arts, media and publishing	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Classical and modern foreign languages	Good: Grade 2
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Independent living and leisure skills	Good: Grade 2
Family learning	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. The quality of provision in early years and playwork is outstanding. Retention rates and attendance are good in all curriculum areas and very good in some. Learners' attainment of skills, and their standard of work, are good in most curriculum areas. They enjoy their classes and gain in confidence and self-esteem. Success rates for accredited courses vary considerably. They are good in early years and playwork and in floristry, but poor on literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses.
5. Teaching and learning are good overall. Tutors plan learning sessions well and use a wide range of stimulating activities to promote learning. Teaching and learning resources are satisfactory, but insufficient use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) in some curriculum areas. Assessment is satisfactory overall. The identification of individual learning needs is an area for improvement in a number of sector subject areas. The recognising and recording of learners' progress and achievement are weak on many non-accredited courses.
6. The range of programmes to meet learners' needs and interests is good. Partnership working is very effective and has enabled the service to provide learning opportunities for adults who have not been in education or training for many years. Educational and social inclusion is good. Links with employers are very effective. The service is developing a strong focus on courses that develop learners' employability skills.
7. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Arrangements for induction and initial assessment are appropriate. Courses are promoted imaginatively. Staff provide good customer care and are sensitive to the needs of adult learners.
8. Leadership and management are good. Leadership of the service is strong. Strategic planning and management are good. The service has maintained its levels of provision while targeting new learners and those from more disadvantaged areas of the borough. Partnerships are used well to meet community and employers' needs. Steering groups make a significant contribution to a number of good initiatives and projects. Equality of opportunity and quality improvement are satisfactory overall. The process for the observation of teaching and learning is thorough.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

9. The council demonstrates good capacity to improve. The effectiveness of steps taken by the provider to promote improvement since the previous inspection is good. Many of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been

rectified successfully. Managers have worked very effectively during 2006-07 to improve under-performing areas of the provision. Retention rates, attendance rates and success rates have all improved over the last two years. The quality improvement plan is used well to bring about improvements to the provision. Most actions have realistic targets and are monitored appropriately.

10. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The process is managed well and includes most staff. The moderation process is thorough and involves internal quality support partners and an external consultant. The last self-assessment report, which was written a year ago, is detailed but the judgements do not adequately support some of the grades given for curriculum areas. Inspectors' judgements matched some of the key strengths but the report failed to identify some significant areas for improvement. Most of the grades given in the report were higher than those given by inspectors. The service has identified the inaccuracies in the report and has carried out a number of actions through the quality improvement plan to improve the self-assessment process.

Key strengths

- Outstanding early years and playwork provision
- Strong leadership
- Good retention and attendance rates
- Good partnerships
- Strong focus on customer care for learners

Key areas for improvement

- The satisfactory success rates on many accredited courses
- The insufficient focus on learners' individual needs in teaching and assessment
- The insufficiently critical and evaluative judgements in the self-assessment report
- The under-developed use of data to monitor and evaluate the provision
- The unsuitable accommodation at one site

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

11. Achievement and standards are good. Retention rates have improved since 2003-04 when the overall retention rate was 85%. In 2005-06, the retention rate was 90%. Retention rates for completed courses in 2006-07 are good, but have fallen slightly in classical and modern foreign languages. Attendance rates are good in most curriculum areas and have improved significantly in a number of subjects. The overall attendance rate for courses completed during 2006-07 is 84%. Success rates on accredited courses are good in some curriculum areas. On most literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses they are poor, but have improved substantially in 2006-07. The overall success rate for accredited courses in 2006-07 stands at 69%, an improvement on the 2005-06 rate of 50%.
12. Learners' attainment of skills and standards of work are good in most curriculum areas. Many learners use the skills gained in their work and personal lives, or to further their education.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

13. Standards of teaching and learning are good. Of the 60 learning sessions observed by inspectors, 65% were judged to be good or better, 32% were satisfactory and 3% were inadequate. The best learning sessions are planned thoroughly and learners' individual needs and interests are met well. Knowledgeable tutors use a range of imaginative activities to promote learning. Teaching and learning resources are satisfactory. Target-setting and the use of individual learning plans are weak. Processes to recognise and record progress and achievement on non-accredited courses are insufficiently developed in some curriculum areas.
14. The service received 30% less funding from the LSC in 2006-07, but has maintained a good range of courses, helped by effective use of resources. Links with employers and partnership working are good. There is a strong focus on raising skills levels in the local economy. The service has made a deliberate decision to expand its provision for under-represented groups of learners. Courses take place at a wide range of venues across the borough.
15. Tutors provide appropriate and effective personal support for learners. Most tutors provide adequate support for learners with additional learning needs. Learners receive appropriate advice about suitable courses. Provision is promoted well. Advice and guidance for progression and career development is good in early years and playwork but insufficiently systematic in family learning.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

16. Leadership of the service is strong. Managers have not been able to implement a planned restructure of the service, but have worked hard to maintain staff morale and to carry the provision forward at a time of uncertainty. The restriction on the appointment of new staff has enabled the promotion and development of existing staff, many of whom have responded very well to the challenge of their new roles. All staff have a clear understanding of the aims of the service and its future development. The service has developed a business-orientated approach to all aspects of its provision. There is a particularly strong focus on good customer service at all centres.
17. Strategic plans are well developed and based on a detailed review of council priorities. Provision meets the changing needs of local communities. Managers carefully establish whether programmes will attract the necessary funding. The service uses its resources very efficiently and within set budgets. This good financial management has enabled it to maintain its provision despite cuts in LSC funding. Where courses have run with the same groups of learners for a number of years, they have been turned into self-financing clubs, allowing teaching time to be used for new learners. Operational planning processes are good.
18. Good partnership working brings about significant benefits for learners across the borough. Partners demonstrate a strong commitment to social and educational inclusion. They have been instrumental in improving the availability of learning opportunities for disadvantaged adults in the south of the borough. Steering groups have been used effectively to improve provision, introducing good initiatives, and devolving specific projects to working parties who have quickly implemented realistic solutions.
19. The arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. The head of service monitors the implementation of the quality improvement system, which is integrated with the strategic planning framework. Self-assessment processes are planned well, but the most recent report is not sufficiently self-critical. Arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning are appropriate. Observation grades reflect the strengths and weaknesses identified. The outcomes of observations are used to improve performance.
20. The management of data is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. Data on enrolments is more timely and accurate. However, the data regarding success rates on non-accredited courses is not sufficiently reliable. The management information system is not sufficiently flexible to ascertain how many learners progress from one course to another.

21. The arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory. All centre managers have received appropriate risk assessment and first aid training and have carried out risk assessments at their own venues. Some tutors do not adhere closely to agreed procedures, particularly in arts, media and publishing.
22. Much accommodation has improved. Well designed and comprehensively equipped new centres provide good learning environments. The accommodation at one site has not been improved and is in a poor state of repair. Plans exist to move the provision at this site to a new venue.
23. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The service fulfils its obligations under the relevant race relations, disability and equality legislation. The council's implementation of its skills for life strategy is satisfactory. Access to buildings is good. The reinforcement of equality of opportunity in the curriculum is appropriate. In early years and playwork, it is particularly good. The numbers of learners with disabilities and/or additional learning support needs have risen steadily. The service carries out a number of effective actions to ensure that barriers to learning are kept to a minimum and there is sufficient provision in the less affluent parts of the borough. Differences exist in how some aspects of initial assessment and additional support are offered to learners. The focus on learners' individual needs is an area for improvement in many curriculum areas.
24. The service has been slow to develop processes for monitoring learners' progress and achievements in non-accredited learning. Examples of good practice exist in some curriculum areas but these have not been shared sufficiently well across the service.

What learners like:

- 'I like meeting different people and getting new ideas'
- The new buildings which are maintained well
- the dedicated and supportive tutors who put a lot of effort into preparing lessons
- The welcoming and enjoyable atmosphere
- 'Classes are so good that we would like to attend more than once a week'
- The very professional approach to customer service
- The crèche facilities

What learners think could improve:

- Car parking at most centres
- Arrangements for enrolling online
- Availability of courses in some curriculum areas over the summer
- Times at which classes start and finish to take account of collecting children from school
- Sound proofing screens in classrooms used for languages teaching
- Availability of courses during the daytime and at the weekend
- Length of time it takes to receive certificates at the end of courses

- 'Being able to come more than once a week as I tend to forget things'

Early years and playwork

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

25. At the time of the inspection, 131 learners were enrolled on early years and playwork courses, three of them men. In 2005-06, there were 487 enrolments on courses in this curriculum area. Most courses are accredited and are offered at levels 1 to 3. They include pre-school practice, playwork, helping in the classroom, working with special needs and home-based childcare. Introductory courses which run for three weeks are offered throughout the year. Learners are in employment or are on work placement in a range of occupational settings, such as playgroups, nurseries, schools and out-of-hours clubs. An acting programme manager is responsible for the provision, supported by five part-time tutors.

Strengths

- Very good success rates
- very good development of learners' skills and knowledge
- Good internal progression
- Very good teaching and learning
- Very effective and responsive partnerships
- Outstanding leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- No significant areas for improvement

Achievement and standards

26. Success rates are very good. They range from 82% to 100% on all courses and are significantly above national averages. For example, all the learners who enrolled on the diplomas in childminding practice and extending childminding practice in 2005-06, achieved the qualification. Attendance rates are very good. The attendance rate during the week of inspection was 96%. In 2006-07 to date, the overall retention rate on completed courses is 91%.

27. Learners develop very good skills and knowledge. They learn best practice techniques, which they apply successfully in the workplace. Their knowledge and understanding of children's needs and development are very good. Learners' written assignments are excellent and are based on considerable independent research. Learners work very well together in groups and share the outcomes of their research collaboratively. In one learning session observed by inspectors, learners carried out extensive research on ideas to promote the concepts of equality and diversity with children. They shared a wide range of ideas and

resources. At the end of the class, all the learners had developed a substantial collection of ideas, activities and contacts.

28. Internal progression is good. Many learners who achieve their first qualification progress to courses at a higher level. In 2005-06, between one third and just over one half of all learners on most courses progressed to a course at the next level in early years and playwork.

Quality of provision

29. Teaching and learning are very good. Thorough lesson planning incorporates a wide range of activities and the five outcomes of Every Child Matters. Tutors encourage learners to become skilled at reflecting successfully on aspects of their own practice. Equality and diversity are promoted very well in learning sessions. In one class, learners carry out a simple listening exercise using earplugs and shakers. Using this experience, they are able to appreciate the difficulties faced by children in a classroom who have listening impairments and the extent to which other senses are important.
30. Initial assessment is thorough. Many learners receive effective individual language, literacy and numeracy support. On a number of programmes, tutors carry out course-related skills assessments to support the advice and guidance given to learners when discussing appropriate course levels. Learners' progress is monitored very carefully through good use of individual learning plans and regular tutorial reviews. Learners complete an individual learning review at the end of each class, which enables the tutor to modify the planned learning activities and to negotiate revised learning outcomes with learners. Learners apply their new learning very well in occupational settings. Tutors set learners regular homework, which is assessed to a very high standard and which incorporates detailed feedback. Learners value the support they receive from tutors highly. The formal recording of plans to meet learners' individual needs is insufficient in a small number of classes.
31. Partnerships are very effective and responsive. The council's early years service makes a significant contribution to the staffing and resourcing of the adult education provision. The service is responsible for much of the council's workforce development in early years and playwork. Good partnership working is used to design courses carefully to meet the specific needs of local communities. Programmes are integrated successfully with other curriculum areas, such as ESOL provision. Staff carry out an important role as members of influential committees, both locally and across London. Courses take place in a wide range of locations that are accessible to learners and at times which suit learners' family commitments well.
32. Advice and guidance for career development is thorough. New learners have a very good understanding of courses and the requirements of working with children. Tutors provide very useful pre-course advice for learners and assistance

to help them find work placements. Learners are supported very well during work experience.

Leadership and management

33. Leadership and management are outstanding. The team of well qualified and very experienced staff work very effectively to promote good practice to learners, many of whom gain employment with the council. Staff share in a culture of continuous improvement and take their own professional development very seriously. Tutors value the transparency of decision-making and good communication demonstrated by managers. All staff contribute to a very positive working environment. Their judgements are incorporated fully in the self-assessment process and they have a good understanding of the actions required to bring about improvements. The most recent self-assessment report identifies accurately most of the strengths of the provision. The promotion of equality of opportunity in the curriculum is very good. Most of the accommodation is satisfactory or good.

Arts, media and publishing

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

34. The arts, media and publishing provision is one of the most diverse curriculum areas in the council. In 2006-07 to date, 512 learners have enrolled on 115 courses. Approximately 80% of the learners are women and 46% are learners who have not attended one of the service's courses previously. Of all learners, 22% are from a minority ethnic background. In 2005-06, 620 learners were enrolled on courses in this curriculum area. Courses take place at seven main centres and include non-accredited painting, drawing, textiles, ceramics, jewellery, violin making, calligraphy and interior design, and accredited courses in photography and embroidery. The small performing arts provision includes ballroom dancing, line dancing and drama. Most courses run for two hours in the evening, over 10 weeks. A programme manager is responsible for the provision, supported by three part-time curriculum co-ordinators and 29 part-time tutors.

Strengths

- Good development of practical skills
- Good planning of individual learning in mixed-ability groups
- Innovative and successful monitoring of learners' progress on some courses
- Good enrichment opportunities to complement learning

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient co-ordination of the curriculum area at course level
- Insufficient focus on health and safety
- Poor accommodation and resources for some courses

Achievement and standards

35. The standard of learners' practical work is good in dance, violin making, calligraphy and ceramics. Learners' technical and craft skills improve considerably on many courses. Those on drama programmes respond enthusiastically to the encouragement they receive and contribute fully to learning sessions through discussions, informal peer review and self-evaluation of their practical skills. New learners in a dance class practice complicated routines and are able to identify clearly the skills they have learnt. Learners in a calligraphy class use colour well to demonstrate a wide range of calligraphic styles. Learners enjoy the sharing of knowledge and resources in groups, particularly in violin making. Most can identify improvements in their confidence and self-esteem through attending courses. In a small number of painting classes, some learners do not have sufficient confidence to extend their painting skills to progress from working from copied images.

36. Retention rates are good. In 2005-06, the overall retention rate was 91%. On completed courses in 2006-07 to date, the retention rate is 90%. In 2005-06, the success rates on the two accredited courses in embroidery and photography were 73% and 46%, respectively.

Quality of provision

37. Planning for individual learning in mixed-ability groups is good. Low enrolments on some courses have resulted in the combining of groups of learners with a wide range of abilities and experience. Tutors plan learning sessions well, ensuring that learners with a wide range of abilities are able to progress with activities that reflect their prior experience. In line dancing, beginners practise initial dance steps, while more experienced dancers are able to incorporate more complex dance routines. In drama classes, tutors encourage learners of all abilities to work in pairs and to share their rehearsal experiences. Tutors who teach violin making monitor learners' individual progress carefully to support less able learners and to provide challenging tasks for more skilled learners in the same class. However, in the less successful learning sessions, planning is poor and more advanced learners are not set challenging targets. Insufficient resources restrict learning in some painting classes. Inspectors observed the use of information and learning technology (ILT) in only one class and it did not enhance learning.

38. The monitoring of learners' progress is innovative and successful on some courses. Tutors use a pilot assessment scheme well to improve the monitoring of learners' progress and performances. Tutors and learners complete an individual learning diary at the end of every class to evaluate learners' thoughts and progress. Detailed comments are recorded for each learner's negotiated learning outcomes, which are then updated in individual learning plans. The diaries enable learners to record their progress accurately and to improve their skills in self-evaluation.

39. Enrichment opportunities to complement learning are good. Learners use a wide range of events and visits to enhance their skills. Many in dance and drama take part in public performances. Learners on photography courses enter a number of competitions. In calligraphy, they carry out commissions for posters and publicity materials. In music, professional musicians visit classes to play the instruments alongside learners. Flamenco dance learners have visited Spain. There are many visits to museums and exhibitions.

40. Support and guidance for learners is satisfactory. Most tutors are aware of the arrangements to support learners with additional learning needs.

Leadership and management

41. There is insufficient co-ordination of the curriculum area at course level. The programme manager currently has additional responsibilities as acting programme manager for wider family learning and is supported by only three

part-time curriculum co-ordinators. Some managers are not sufficiently aware of the performance of the curriculum area and some are not fully involved in the self-assessment process and other quality improvement initiatives. The self-assessment report does not contain enough critical evaluation. Grades given for classroom observations are not a sufficiently accurate reflection of the quality of teaching and learning. The monitoring of lesson plans and schemes of work is poor and some course files are incomplete.

42. There is insufficient focus on health and safety. Risk assessments do not always identify accurately the risks associated with specialist courses. Some dangerous materials are not kept in appropriately secure storage areas. Information about control of substances hazardous to health is insufficiently detailed in course files. Learners on ceramic courses are not fully aware of health and safety issues. Some health and safety and labelling is inadequate.
43. Accommodation and resources are poor for some courses. The new centres provide a welcoming and professional environment. However, the new art and photography studios are too small to accommodate the number of learners in classes and the full range of learning activities. Learners in another art class have no access to easels or drawing boards. Learners on a jewellery course use a science laboratory which is unsuitable. The acoustics are poor at one school hall used for drama programmes.

Classical and modern foreign languages

Good: Grade 2

Context

44. Classical and modern foreign languages is the second largest curriculum area in the council. In 2005-06, more than 1,000 learners enrolled on 67 courses in 16 languages at five centres across the borough. At the time of the inspection, 631 learners were enrolled on 72 courses in 11 languages. More than half of the courses take place in the evening and include French, Spanish, Italian and German as well as less common subjects such as Russian, Polish, Arabic, Mandarin Chinese and Japanese. Courses are offered from entry level to level 4 for the most popular languages and are mainly non-accredited. A small number of French, Italian and Spanish GCSE and A level courses are available. The curriculum area is managed by a programme manager who is supported by a curriculum co-ordinator, an administrative assistant and 31 part-time tutors.

Strengths

- Very effective use of the target language
- Good teaching and learning resources
- Extensive range of provision
- Strong partnership working

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient attention to the learning needs of some learners
- Insufficient identification of areas for improvement in teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

45. Retention rates are satisfactory. In 2005-06, the overall retention rate was 85%. However, the retention rate for completed courses in 2006-07 has fallen to 78%. Success rates for accredited courses are also satisfactory. In 2005-06, 79% of learners on GCSE and A level courses gained a qualification, compared with 56% in 2004-05. Attendance rates are good.

46. Learners develop appropriate language skills in many learning sessions. In the better lessons, they use the target language confidently to demonstrate a wide range of structures and vocabulary. Many learners achieve the aim of being able to use the target language for a variety of purposes, such as charity work and communicating with employers' offices overseas.

Quality of provision

47. The target language is used very effectively in many language learning sessions. Tutors use the language well to promote good development of learners' listening skills and to encourage learners to take part in spontaneous conversation. In the best lessons, learners develop good pronunciation and intonation and use the foreign language as the natural medium of communication. Learners in an advanced class are able to justify answers in French during an exercise on the use of the subjunctive tense. In a beginner's Spanish class, learners were able to understand a complicated grammar point and new vocabulary, presented in the target language with the aid of pictures and slides.
48. Teaching and learning resources are good. Interactive whiteboards are available in most classrooms and they are used well by tutors. In the most effective lessons, tutors use information and learning technology and authentic materials well to stimulate learners' interest and to encourage their participation. Tutors have access to a wide range of good e-learning resources through a virtual learning environment.
49. The range of provision is extensive. The council offers learning in 16 languages through 67 courses, most of which have clear progression routes. The policy on small group sizes supports the provision of less popular languages, such as Arabic, Polish, Japanese and Mandarin Chinese. A small number of courses are accredited and the service is currently piloting the accreditation of further language programmes. Good partnership working with a local languages college enables the service to provide business language courses to a number of employers and to run a five week introductory course for pupils from local schools and their parents. Tutors make good use of enrichment activities, such as visits to restaurants, cinemas, art galleries and foreign countries, to enhance learners' enjoyment and to extend their learning.
50. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate advice about suitable courses before enrolment and are able to carry out a short self-assessment test to identify their skill level. Learners have good opportunities to speak to tutors during open evenings and over the telephone. Classrooms are easily accessible to learners with restricted mobility. Learners with additional learning needs are supported appropriately.
51. In some of the learning sessions observed by inspectors, tutors did not have strategies in place to take account of learners' different needs and abilities. More capable learners are not challenged sufficiently and weaker learners struggle to understand important concepts. In a few lessons, tutors' teaching styles do not allow learners to develop their speaking skills sufficiently.

Leadership and management

52. Partnership working is strong. The partnership with a local languages college provides very good teaching and learning facilities for adult learners. The resources include 14 spacious, fully-equipped, well furnished classrooms. Tutors and learners have good access to interactive whiteboards, a specialist audio room and ICT resources. The partnership successfully delivers introductory courses in less popular languages, languages for family learning and business languages. There is good liaison with employers. The service offers a wide range of English and foreign language courses to employees.
53. Staff development and training is effective. Good opportunities exist for tutors to attend internal and external professional development events throughout the year. The service has trained all tutors working at the partner college in the use of ILT. Attendance at training events is good. Recent staff development activities have included useful internal training on e-learning and external training on language teaching techniques.
54. A range of paperwork is used to record learners' progress and achievement on non-accredited courses. Some tutors use the paperwork appropriately, but others do not use it to assist in planning to meet individual learning styles. In some cases, it does not give sufficient indication of learners' individual levels of achievement.
55. Many of the actions in the quality improvement plan have been carried out successfully. The self-assessment report is generally accurate and identifies most of the strengths found by inspectors. However, the self-assessment process failed to identify both of the key areas for improvement found on inspection.
56. The identification of areas for improvement in teaching and learning is insufficient. Only one tutor was observed between September 2006 and March 2007. More than 20 class visits have been carried out since the start of the academic year to monitor course paperwork and to identify areas for concern. The visits have not identified the insufficient attention to learners' individual needs.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

57. Literacy, numeracy and ESOL is the largest curriculum area in the service. At the time of the inspection, 202 learners were enrolled on literacy courses and 111 learners on numeracy courses. ESOL courses accounted for 325 learners. The service offers a wide range of literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes at different levels in the north and the south of the borough. The provision in the south of the borough is targeted particularly at non-traditional learners from disadvantaged socio-economic groups and wards with multiple deprivation. Outreach provision includes literacy and numeracy courses for primary school teaching assistants. Classes take place during the daytime and evenings. The provision is managed by two programme managers, one supported by two tutor co-ordinators.

Strengths

- Good success rates for literacy and numeracy learners on the higher level teaching assistants (HLTA) schools workforce improvement programme
- Good retention rates
- Good support for learners
- Strong leadership of ESOL provision

Areas for improvement

- Poor success rates on entry level literacy and numeracy and courses and all ESOL programmes
- Ineffective strategies to meet the needs of individual learners in mixed-ability groups
- Ineffective use of individual learning plans for some learners

Achievement and standards

58. Retention rates are good on all programmes. In 2005-06, the overall retention rate in the three programme areas was 89%. In 2006-07 to date, the retention rate for completed courses is 92%. The attendance rate in 2006-07 is 80%. Learners enjoy learning sessions. They develop appropriate skills and knowledge and the quality of their work is satisfactory.

59. Success rates are good for literacy and numeracy learners on the HLTA schools workforce improvement programme. Since the introduction of the programme for classroom support assistants who work in local schools, 169 learners have enrolled on the courses. Level 2 qualifications in literacy and/or numeracy have been achieved by 85% of learners.

60. Success rates on entry level literacy and numeracy courses and all ESOL programmes are poor. In 2005-06, the success rate for ESOL courses was 9%, but success rates have started to improve this year. In 2005-06, overall success rates for literacy and numeracy courses were poor at 48% and 38%, respectively. The success rates at entry levels were 31% for literacy and 30% for numeracy. They have started to improve in 2006-07 and were 66% and 62% for completed literacy and numeracy courses, respectively, at the time of the inspection. Success rates for entry level learners remain poor at 35% in 2006-07 to date.

Quality of provision

61. Support for learners is good. Learning environments are very supportive. The centres used are welcoming and have pleasant working environments. Pastoral support is good, particularly in the classroom. Tutors have a good understanding of adult learners' personal problems and social barriers. Many learners who have children value the free childcare facilities. Arrangements to support learners with additional learning needs are good. Detailed screening is carried out and the outcomes are used effectively to plan good practical support in the classroom. Learners have access to a good range of adaptive and assistive equipment for learning.

62. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most learning sessions are planned well and resourced appropriately. In the better classes, learning is good and learners are motivated well. Learners develop sufficient self-confidence to contribute well in activities in the classroom. The centres used are welcoming and have pleasant working environments. The new and modern centres are equipped well with computers and interactive whiteboards.

63. The range of courses is appropriate. Programmes take place at a number of different venues throughout the borough. Adults from a number of disadvantaged wards are able to attend classes easily. Courses are offered at a wide range of levels and run at times to suit learners with work and personal commitments. The council works effectively with a number of organisations to deliver programmes that improve employability skills.

64. There is insufficient planning and use of teaching strategies to meet the needs of individual learners in mixed-ability groups. In many learning sessions, planning does not ensure that the needs of individual learners are met. Many activities in lessons focus only on dividing the class up into subgroups based on learners' general abilities. This is a particular area for improvement on ESOL courses where learners are enrolled three times a year and groups contain a mix of both new starters and continuing learners.

65. The use of individual learning plans is ineffective for some learners. A review has been carried out of the design of individual learning plans and staff training has led to some improvements in their use. However, the recording of learners' individual targets and progress remains poor. Information about learners is

incomplete or insufficiently detailed. The plans are insufficiently helpful in preparing for lessons and motivating learners. Procedures for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement are not yet developed fully, particularly for learners' personal and social development.

Leadership and management

66. Leadership of the ESOL programme is strong. Recent changes in the management structure have led to the introduction of new improvement strategies and a range of appropriate actions to resolve many of the weaknesses in the curriculum area. Class sizes have been reduced and arrangements for learners' induction and initial assessment have been improved. Training and guidance for observers have also improved. Greater focus is now given to lesson planning and the management of learning sessions. Retention rates and success rates have improved considerably during 2006-07.

67. Communications are effective and staff are supported well by managers. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Managers have good strategies for continuing professional development of staff and many tutors have been supported to achieve level 4 teaching qualifications.

68. Effective actions have been taken to improve the arrangements for self-assessment. The judgements in the last self-assessment report were not an accurate reflection of performance in the curriculum area and did not identify significant weaknesses, such as success rates. The use of data to analyse the provision in that report was insufficient, particularly in literacy and numeracy. In 2006-07, the quality improvement plan has been used well to monitor the provision more carefully and to enable managers to have a more realistic view of the quality of the provision.

Independent living and leisure skills

Good: Grade 2

Context

69. At the time of the inspection, the service was running 55 courses for 250 adults with learning disabilities and/or difficulties. Many of the learners have significant medical and social needs. The provision in this curriculum area has grown by 25% since 2005-06. Courses are mostly at pre-entry level with a small number of courses offered at level 1. Almost all programmes are accredited and take place at six venues managed by the service and five community sites. A programme manager is responsible for the provision, supported by 19 part-time tutors, a learning support team leader and 18 learning support assistants.

Strengths

- Good achievements
- Good teaching and learning
- Good range of provision

Areas for improvement

- Inadequate assessment procedures

Achievement and standards

70. Achievement is good. Learners' achievements are diverse and are celebrated in many different ways. Success rates on accredited courses are very good. The overall success rate in 2005-06 was 82%. Retention and attendance rates are good. The retention rate in 2005-06 was 91%. The attendance rate during the inspection was over 90%. Very few learners withdraw from courses. Learners progress well to complete the units of accredited qualifications. The use of photographic evidence is good on some courses. Learners' portfolios contain a wide range of evidence of their achievements. Attainment is good in most learning sessions. Learners use their improved confidence and social skills to interact more effectively with each other and with tutors.

Quality of provision

71. Teaching and learning is good. Most tutors prepare well for learning sessions to ensure that learners take part in a wide range of practical, challenging and relevant activities. In a practical flower arranging class, the tutor carries out extensive preparation in the selection of flowers and other materials to take account of learners' colour and textural preferences. Tutors have high expectations of learners. They incorporate the development of learners' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills successfully into leisure activities. Teaching staff are well

qualified and experienced. Their energy and enthusiasm for the subject area is very evident in all classes.

72. The range of provision is good. The service effectively uses feedback from meetings with learners and surveys to introduce new courses that meet learners' needs and interests. Level 1 provision has been developed as a progression route from pre-entry and entry level courses. Programmes take place at venues that are easily accessible to most learners. Opportunities for learners to progress to courses at local general further education courses are limited.
73. Guidance and support for learners is satisfactory. The service identifies and supports learners with additional learning needs carefully. In a learning session observed by inspectors, staff were skilled at interpreting the needs of a learner for whom eye pointing was their only means of communication. Sufficient adaptive technology is available to support learners who have difficulty with their mobility and motor control. When learners with additional learning needs are identified at enrolment, staff from residential homes are used to offer extra support. The service has not yet provided clear written guidance on how these staff should support teaching and learning. The range of ILT resources is good, but some tutors do not use them appropriately.
74. Partnership working with private providers and statutory adult services is satisfactory. Good planning has enabled a comprehensive offer of courses that take place at locations which are convenient to learners. The use of a local rural activities centre has provided a successful practical course in environmental studies. Communication with partners is good. Any problems that arise are rectified quickly. Arrangements for strategic planning and to evaluate the effectiveness of provision are not yet fully effective.
75. Assessment procedures are inadequate. Initial assessment is weak and does not ensure that learners' needs and abilities are understood fully at the start of a course. Tutors use a range of assessment methods but none is sufficiently detailed to assist effectively in course planning. Individual learning plans are not used on most courses. Where they are used, target-setting is weak. Structured pre-entry course books are used to identify when learners achieve parts of their programme successfully, but do not show the progress made by individual learners. Processes to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement have not been implemented fully.

Leadership and management

76. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leadership of the curriculum area is strong. Managers have a good understanding of quality improvement processes. Learners' feedback is collected effectively through regular meetings with learners. Observations of teaching and learning are carried out regularly and support staff well to improve their teaching practice. The outcomes of lesson observations are used as part of the staff appraisal process. Managers communicate well with part-time tutors and learning support assistants.

77. Support for staff is good. The service makes a significant commitment to continuing professional development for tutors. Many staff have completed, or have recently started, additional training in the delivery of literacy skills. Tutors are well qualified and many are experienced practitioners in their own vocational area.

78. The self-assessment process is not sufficiently thorough or evaluative. The grade given by the service in the most recent self-assessment report does not represent the quality of the provision accurately. A significant weakness in the provision was not identified during self-assessment.

Family learning

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

79. The service offers family literacy, language and numeracy programmes and courses for wider family learning. Language, literacy and numeracy programmes include courses in keeping up with the children, extension courses in literacy and numeracy, programmes for ESOL learners and joint courses for children and parents. The wider family learning curriculum provides a range of short courses, including ICT, crafts, dance and outdoor pursuits. In 2005-06, 528 learners took part in family literacy, language and numeracy courses and 384 learners were enrolled on wider family learning programmes. The service works with 37 schools throughout the borough.

Strengths

- Good retention rates
- Good development of learners' skills, knowledge and confidence
- Good and much improved take up of qualifications
- Good partnership strategies to meet the changing needs of local communities and schools

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient attention to meeting learners' individual needs and abilities
- Insufficient use of ICT to support learning
- Weak monitoring of learners' progression
- Insufficiently systematic information, advice and guidance

Achievement and standards

80. Retention rates are good. In 2005-06, the retention rate on family literacy, language and numeracy courses was 86%. The overall retention rate for completed courses in 2006-07 has improved to 93%. In wider family learning, the retention rate for 2005-06 was 96%, which has improved to 99% for completed courses in 2006-07.

81. Learners develop good skills, knowledge and confidence on family learning courses. Many of the learners on the keeping up with children courses have been educated in other countries, but show a good understanding of what their children are learning in school and how to support them. They develop the self-confidence to approach their children's school teachers to ask questions about homework. In joint literacy classes for children and parents, adult learners demonstrate good use of the correct terminology to help their children understand grammar and to use phonics to understand unfamiliar words.

Learners on wider family learning craft courses develop a range of techniques to use with their children at home. Learners develop confidence through the acquisition of new skills and carrying out challenging activities, such as rock climbing. Many parents now participate more in their children's school activities.

82. Success rates on accredited literacy and numeracy courses are satisfactory. In 2005-06, the overall success rates for the small numbers of learners enrolled on accredited literacy and numeracy programmes were 86% and 91%, respectively.

Quality of provision

83. The uptake of qualifications is good and much improved. This was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection. In 2005-06, 50 learners were entered for qualifications. In 2006-07 to date, 102 learners have taken the opportunity to study for a qualification and 84 have been successful. Learners on the keeping up with the children courses now enrol for accredited literacy and numeracy extension courses. Learners on the talking families courses have the opportunity to work towards an ESOL qualification.
84. The range of provision is satisfactory. Some wider family learning programmes effectively involve whole families in learning. Women are encouraged to participate in less traditional activities, such as rock climbing and navigation. Courses are socially and educationally inclusive. Parents and children with disabilities are encouraged to participate. Some courses are targeted specifically at learners of all ages who have disabilities. Childcare provision is good. Translators are used effectively to help adult learners who have language difficulties. The accommodation at some schools is not suitable for adult learners.
85. Insufficient attention is given to meeting learners' individual needs and abilities. Tutors do not use individual learning plans to assist in planning learning sessions. They do not take sufficient account of learners' prior attainment, interests and individual language needs when planning activities and selecting resources. Too much whole-group teaching takes place where learners carry out the same activities. Tasks are too difficult for some learners while others are not sufficiently challenged. Teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. Tutors are knowledgeable and use a good range of resources to develop learners' interest and skills.
86. The use of ICT to support learning is insufficient. Very little reference is made to the use of ICT in schemes of work and lesson plans. Many classrooms do not have computers or any other access to ICT resources. Tutors do not use ICT to support the development of parents' skills and ability to support their children at home.
87. Information, advice and guidance is not sufficiently systematic. Learners receive information informally from tutors about progression opportunities and further courses. The quality of information and guidance depends on the knowledge of individual tutors. Planned guidance sessions are not integrated with courses.

Learners are encouraged to progress and are consulted about further family learning courses, but are not always aware of wider opportunities within the service or at local colleges.

Leadership and management

88. The service has good partnership strategies to meet the changing needs of local communities and schools. These include a range of good initiatives linked to the extended schools agenda and to changing local authority priorities. The service takes a leading role in the development of family learning provision and targets courses well to increase participation by hard-to-reach families. One of the acting programme managers is a member of the steering group for extended schools. Partners value the responsiveness of the service and their willingness to support a wide range of initiatives. The restructuring of the service has slowed the influence of some partnership working.
89. The monitoring of learners' progression is weak. This weakness was identified at the previous inspection and has not been rectified. The service's management information system is not sufficiently developed to follow up learners' progression. Staff have very little systematic information about learners' progression to other courses or to employment. The service is unable to evaluate its success in promoting progression or to use this data to improve planning.
90. Staff are supported well in family learning and communication is good. The most recent self-assessment report is evaluative, but does not identify some significant areas for improvement.

