INSPECTION REPORT

Swarthmore Education Centre

20 June 2003

ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

SWARTHMORE EDUCATION CENTRE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	grade 1
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	grade 5

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Overall judgement

Where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:
- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, **or**
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory.

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

INSPECTION REPORT

Swarthmore Education Centre

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Swarthmore Education Centre (Swarthmore) was established in 1909 and has historic links with the Quaker movement. A registered charity, Swarthmore became a company limited by guarantee on 1 April 2003. It is situated in an inner city area to the west of Leeds city centre. The company's three main activities are to provide adult and community learning courses, to participate in local community regeneration initiatives and to let accommodation and facilities as community resources for local groups. Swarthmore receives government funding directly from West Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and from Leeds City Council Local Education Authority (LEA). It also offers self-financing courses, supported by the company's own funding. Most of the LSC-funded courses lead to nationally recognised qualifications in information and communications technology (ICT), visual and performing arts, foundation programmes and counselling. Inspection covered only the first three areas of learning, as there were insufficient courses in counselling during the week of inspection. Inspection included judgements about the quality of the LEA-funded provision, mostly for disadvantaged learners, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and the self-funded programmes in visual and performing arts. During 2001-02, there were over 2,280 enrolments, or over 1,500 learners, on Swarthmore's courses.

2. Swarthmore's main aim is to widen participation to include those who are new to adult and community learning. Learners include those who are unemployed, have dependent families, low incomes, mental health problems, people who lack confidence, women, and older people, as well as those with learning difficulties. The Swarthmore Council (the council) is an independent body of approximately 18 members which oversees Swarthmore's work. The director reports to the council and leads a team of four curriculum and two administrative managers. Swarthmore currently employs 18 staff and up to 42 part-time tutors. Approximately 40 volunteer staff and non-teaching assistants support learners throughout the areas of learning.

3. Swarthmore is situated in one of the top 10 per cent most deprived local government wards in the country. It provides courses for people living in this ward and throughout the city. In May 2003, the proportion of unemployed people in Leeds was 2.9 per cent, slightly higher than the national average of 2.6 per cent. Leeds has a minority ethnic population of 8.2 per cent, according to the 2001 census. During 2001-02, approximately 18 per cent of learners supported by the LEA and 19 per cent of those funded by the LSC were from minority ethnic groups. Approximately 18 per cent of learners stated that they had disabilities, including those with learning difficulties and physical disabilities.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

4. Swarthmore offers short 'taster' courses in computing which last for between three and six hours and provide a first step to the main ICT courses. These main courses are funded by the LSC and lead to nationally recognised qualifications in a basic computer literacy qualification for beginners to level 3. Additional short courses are offered in computer graphics and using digital photography and processing. A UK online partnership funds a drop-in resource centre and workshops for all of Swarthmore's learners and staff, and people from the local community. Short courses held in off-site community locations are designed to encourage learners to progress to courses held at Swarthmore. Since September, approximately 347 learners have enrolled on part-time ICT courses. During the week of inspection, six part-time tutors taught on the 12 LSC courses and UK online workshops, attended by approximately 121 learners.

Visual & performing arts & media

5. Swarthmore offers visual and performing arts courses from beginner level to approximately level 3 or advanced. About a quarter of the courses provided each year lead to nationally recognised qualifications. At the time of inspection, nine of the 24 courses are funded through the LSC. Subjects include jewellery, pottery, stained glass and creative painting. The two LEA-funded courses include a general arts course and basic woodwork. Learners on the leisure courses practise skills in drawing, painting, pottery and music. Thirteen part-time tutors teach these courses, which last between 10 and 33 weeks, daytime and evenings. Some courses take place at weekends and during the summer. Over 630 learners have enrolled since September 2002, representing about one-third of Swarthmore's learners; 75 per cent of these are women and 7 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. The LEA currently funds two family learning courses in pottery and painting.

Foundation programmes

6. Foundation programmes include 31 literacy and numeracy and supported learning courses for learners, which require a high level of support. Five part-time tutors support the 19 LSC-funded courses in literacy and numeracy, with approximately 142 enrolments. The LEA-funded courses in pottery, music, and drama, have about 120 enrolments. Courses take place during the daytime and evening. Most sessions are two hours in length. Learners can enrol on most courses at any time of the year. They can work towards an nationally recognised qualification in literacy or numeracy, or work towards their own individual learning goals.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	25
Number of learner interviews	113
Number of staff interviews	72
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	2
Number of partner/external agency interviews	17

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

7. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Swarthmore's leadership and management, and quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The quality of adult and community learning is outstanding in visual and performing arts and media, and satisfactory in ICT and foundation programmes.

GRADES

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	3

Areas of learning	Grade
Information & communications technology	3
Visual & performing arts & media	1
Foundation programmes	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

8. A satisfactory proportion of learners on ICT courses achieve their learning goals. In 2001-02, 62 per cent of learners who left an ICT course completed the learning target of a nationally recognised qualification. **Some learners had significant barriers to learning and have made considerable progress to achieve a qualification.** Learners' progress is satisfactory in developing personal and learning skills. Many continue on other courses in other areas of learning.

9. **Learners' attainment of skills in visual and performing arts is very good.** They

consistently achieve a very high standard of finished work in options such as stained glass, painting, pottery, and jewellery. **Retention and achievement rates on courses leading to qualifications are good.** In 2001-02, 86 per cent of the 140 learners who left the courses achieved the qualification linked to that course.

10. **Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities on foundation programmes develop good personal and learning skills** through art, dance, music, ICT, woodwork, and exploring nature. Learners' achievements in numeracy are good. They make good progress in acquiring numerical skills, such as fractions, multiplication, and division at higher and lower levels. They use these skills well in practical situations. **Some learners do not make enough progress in improving their literacy skills.** Retention on all foundation programmes is satisfactory and good on some individual programmes.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Information & communications technology	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	8
Visual & performing arts & media	2	5	5	0	0	0	0	12
Foundation programmes	1	2	4	3	0	0	0	10
Total	**3**	**7**	**13**	**7**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**30**
per cent		76.67%		23.33%		0.00%		

11. Tutors and support staff have a good knowledge of ICT and are skilled at giving learners detailed explanations about how to perform technical tasks. Learners acquire ICT skills effectively and gain the confidence they need to carry out required tasks independently.

12. **The popular ICT short courses are very successful in encouraging learners to participate in adult and community learning.** The courses are well structured, providing effective training in initial computing skills at level 1 and 2.

13. **The initial assessment process is inadequate.** The initial assessment checklist is not sufficiently comprehensive and does not adequately identify learners' ICT learning needs when they start the programme. Learners are not given adequate support to identify long-term goals or short-term learning targets. **Although most learners receive satisfactory verbal feedback about their progress and advice for improvement, this is not adequately recorded.**

14. **Learners on all visual and performing arts classes benefit from particularly good standards of teaching.** They are motivated by innovative learning sessions which include very interesting demonstrations. Learners with a wide range of additional support needs also benefit from very good levels of personal support from their fellow learners, tutors and support staff.

15. **Swarthmore provides very good specialist facilities in art and craft studios.** All tutors have very good levels of expertise in their specialised area of visual or performing art. They provide learners with detailed and constructive feedback about their performance and practical skills throughout the programmes.

16. **Tutors teaching learners with learning difficulties and disabilities are particularly skilled at recognising learners' potential.** They successfully inspire and motivate learners to build on their existing skills. Tutors use resources and activities creatively to provide a rich and varied learning experience.

17. **Swarthmore offers a wide range of courses in the supported learning programme.** Learners benefit from the rich variety of courses. Many extend their learning across programme areas or concentrate within a particular course, such as pottery or music. Learners make good use of the range of courses designed to develop their literacy, numeracy, ICT and life skills.

18. Teaching staff are aware of learners' individual learning needs and help learners to improve their skills during learning sessions. However, **individual learning plans are weak** and are not used effectively to plan teaching and learning. Individual learning targets are too vague.

19. **Tutors do not adequately assess and record learners' progress.** Where records are kept, notes frequently refer to activities completed rather than what was learnt. Progress reviews do not receive sufficient information about their progress towards their learning goals during reviews. **Tutors do not adequately develop some learners' literacy skills.**

Leadership and management

20. **Swarthmore provides a wide range of courses which successfully encourages learners new to adult and community learning to join a course.** Particularly effective partnerships with many local and regional community groups have led to successful new courses for specific groups of learners.

21. **All tutors communicate well within their small teaching teams and organise learning sessions effectively.** They receive good guidance from their managers. Day-to-day management of the visual and performing arts programmes is particularly good, with detailed records of learners' progress and achievements.

22. Managers are good at implementing ideas for developing their programmes. **Written strategic and development plans are weak.** They do not provide learners, staff or members of the local community with an effective overview of any long-term developments within each area of learning.

23. **Swarthmore effectively promotes equality of opportunity through its strong set of values,** based on accepting all learners who wish to study at the centre. Swarthmore's staff provide a very supportive environment that effectively meets learners' diverse needs. **However, many of Swarthmore's good practices in promoting equality of**

opportunity are not sufficiently planned or monitored. Staff promote Swarthmore's values well, but staff training in equal opportunities is inadequately planned or co-ordinated.

24. Many of Swarthmore's quality assurance procedures are satisfactory. Managers monitor the quality of training well, using observations of learning sessions. Managers and staff value learners' views and appreciate their contribution to improving the quality of the programmes. **Managers do not adequately analyse or use data about learners' achievements, progress and destinations on leaving a course.** They do not use this data enough to form an objective view of the quality of the provision.

25. The internal verification of assessments leading to nationally recognised qualifications is thorough. This involves good standardisation of assessments and effective moderation of marked work. Learners on non-accredited visual arts programmes also benefit from these procedures.

26. The self-assessment report prepared for this inspection was weak in some areas. It did not have self-critical judgements on achievement and progression. Some members of staff and the council are not sufficiently involved in the self-assessment process.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths
- good operational leadership and management
- innovative and successful programmes and projects
- supportive environment to meet learners' diverse needs
- strong promotion of equal opportunities values

Weaknesses
- weak development planning
- insufficiently systematic monitoring and evaluation of equal opportunities
- inadequate analysis and use of data

Information & communications technology
Strengths
- very good level of support for learners
- good use of short courses to attract new learners

Weaknesses
- inadequate initial assessment

- inadequate recording of learning and achievement

Visual & performing arts & media
Strengths
- very good attainment and achievement of qualifications
- good standard of teaching and learning
- very good standard of specialist resources
- good monitoring of learning
- well-managed provision

Weaknesses
- inadequate cleaning of accommodation and specialist maintenance of equipment

Foundation programmes
Strengths
- significant amount of good teaching
- wide range of courses in supported learning programme
- good development of learners' personal and learning skills

Weaknesses
- weak individual learning plans
- insufficient assessment and recording of progress
- insufficient development of some learners' literacy skills

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SWARTHMORE EDUCATION CENTRE:

- friendly and non-threatening atmosphere
- helpful staff, tutors and managers
- good guidance and support
- being accepted as an individual
- the coffee bar with good food and friendly staff
- gaining confidence to 'have a go'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK SWARTHMORE EDUCATION CENTRE COULD IMPROVE:

- the availability of learning programmes in the summer break
- the number of parking spaces
- the amount of space in some of the classrooms
- the speed in responding to requests for information
- the number of courses which can lead to a job
- access to classrooms and facilities

KEY CHALLENGES FOR SWARTHMORE EDUCATION CENTRE:

- maintain the very good standards in the arts programmes
- develop meaningful individual learning plans for all learners in ICT and on foundation programmes
- monitor and record learners' progress
- develop a comprehensive development plan for each area of learning, with realistic and challenging targets
- develop effective arrangements for monitoring and evaluating equal opportunities
- use learners' achievement and progress data to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes

Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

Terminology varies across the range of education and training settings covered by the *Common Inspection Framework.*   The table below indicates the terms appropriate to Adult and Community Learning

Single term used in the framework	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning	
Provider	Provider	Any organisation providing opportunities for adults to meet personal or collective goals through the experience of learning. Providers include local authorities, specialist designated institutions, voluntary and community sector organisations, regeneration partnerships and further education colleges
Learner	Learner	Includes those learning by participating in community projects, as well as those on courses. Learning, however, will be planned, with intended outcomes.
Teacher / trainer	Tutor	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning.
	Mentor	Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them achieve their learning goals.
Learning goals	Main learning goals	Intended gains in skills, knowledge or understanding. Gains may be reflected in the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications. Or they may be reflected in the ability of learners to apply learning in contexts outside the learning situation, e.g. in the family, community, or workplace. Learners' main goal/s should be recorded on an individual or, in some cases, group learning plan. Plans should be revised as progress is made and new goals emerge.
	Secondary learning goals	These may include planned-for gains in self-confidence, and inter-personal skills. These should also be included in learning plans where appropriate.
Personal and learning skills	Personal and learning skills	These include being able to study independently, willingness to collaborate with others, and readiness to take up another opportunity for education or training.

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning
Unanticipated, or unintended learning outcome	Adults often experience unanticipated gains as a result of being involved in learning. These include improved self-esteem, greater self-confidence and a growing sense of belonging to a community. Gains of this kind should be acknowledged and recorded in any record of achievement.
Subject-based programme	A programme organised around a body of knowledge, e.g. the structure and usage of the French language or ceramic glazing techniques. Students could be expected to progress from one aspect of the subject to another, to grasp increasingly complex concepts or analyses or to develop greater levels of skill or to apply skills to a new area of work.
Issue-based programme	A programme that is based on the concerns, interests and aspirations of particular groups, for example members of a Sikh Gurdwara wanting to address inter-faith relations in their town, or parents worried about the incidence of drug abuse in their locality. Issue-based learning tends to be associated with geographically defined communities, but the increasing use of electronic means of communication means that this need no longer be the case. Progress is defined in terms of the group's increasing ability to analyse its situation, to access new information and skills which will help it resolve its difficulties and generate solutions and its growing confidence in dealing with others to implement those solutions.
Outreach provision	Provision established in a community setting in addition to provision made at an organisation's main site(s). Outreach programmes may be similar to courses at the main site(s) or be designed to meet the specific requirements of that community.
Neighbourhood-based work	The provider's staff have a long-term presence in a local community with a specific remit to understand the concerns of the local residents and develop learning activities to meet local needs and interests.
Community regeneration	The process of improving the quality of life in communities by investing in their infrastructure and facilities, creating opportunities for training and employment and tackling poor health and educational under-achievement. Community regeneration requires the active participation of local residents in decision-making. Changes and improvements are often achieved either directly or indirectly as a result of the adult learning activities which arise from this.

	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning
Community capacity building	The process of enabling local people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to take advantage of opportunities for employment, training and further education and to become selfmanaging, sustainable communities.
Active citizenship	The process whereby people recognise the power they have to improve the quality of life for others and make a conscious effort to do so: the process whereby people recognise the power of organisations and institutions to act in the interests of the common good and exercise their influence to ensure that they do so. Adult learning contributes to active citizenship.

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT   Grade 3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths
- good operational leadership and management
- innovative and successful programmes and projects
- supportive environment to meet learners' diverse needs
- strong promotion of equal opportunities values

Weaknesses
- weak development planning
- insufficiently systematic monitoring and evaluation of equal opportunities
- inadequate analysis and use of data

27. Swarthmore's aims are promoted well by managers and staff. Swarthmore provides a wide range of courses which successfully widens participation in adult and community learning and promotes learning for all age groups, from those under 16 to learners over 60 years of age. Managers provide effective leadership when setting up new courses and receive useful guidance and support from the council. Operational management of learning programmes is good. Managers communicate well as a team and provide good support for staff and learners. The management information system is comprehensive. Managers use detailed quantitative data effectively for planning programmes, checking attendance and retention and providing detailed annual reports to the council. However, some part-time tutors are not kept sufficiently informed of developments in some areas of learning. Although they communicate well verbally within small teaching teams, they do not have adequate opportunities for sharing ideas and good practice in teaching and learning.

28. Particularly effective partnerships with a wide range of local and regional community groups have led to successful new courses for specific groups of learners. Current courses include a project for teenage mothers and a course in ICT for clients from the Leeds detoxification centre. Swarthmore consults widely within the local community and has a strong reputation for providing courses that successfully recruit learners with diverse needs. Managers and council members respond well to good ideas to extend the range of programmes they offer and meet the needs of specific community groups. They are skilled at identifying gaps in provision and setting up appropriate projects or specific programmes to fill these gaps. With the support of the council, managers carefully select staff who have the experience, skills and values to carry out these projects and provide effective teaching and learning.

29. Day-to-day financial management is satisfactory. Managers and staff keep good

records of all the internal and external funds and provide satisfactory resources for all programmes of learning. However, area of learning managers are not allocated specific budgets for teaching and learning resources or staff development. When they apply for learning materials or training courses for tutors, they do not know in advance if these funds are available.

30. Swarthmore has identified a need to develop teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy throughout the areas of learning. The organisation is participating in a regional project to develop literacy and numeracy tutors. They have planned some staff development for all staff and tutors, but it is too early to make a judgement on the effectiveness of this initiative.

31. Managers are good at implementing ideas for developing their programmes. However, development planning is primarily short-term and reactive. Written development and strategic plans are weak. These plans do not provide an effective strategic overview of any planned long-term developments within each area of learning. Target-setting is weak, with vague dates for achievement and insufficient information on the envisaged effect of each planned action. The staff training plan is satisfactory for core staff, but the review and development of the training needs of part-time tutors is weak. Although most areas of learning managers plan to observe each tutor at least once a year, the staff development plans specify that this should happen every three years. This is inadequate as it is the only tool for systematically identifying tutors' development needs.

Equality of opportunity   Contributory grade 2

32. Swarthmore's staff provide a highly supportive environment which effectively meets the diverse needs of learners. They fully recognise the need to support all learners, especially those who join new programmes for specific groups of learners who are new to adult and community learning. Staff sensitively identify learners' barriers to learning and provide a wide range of additional support facilities and resources that give learners equality of opportunity for success. These include a well-equipped crèche, specialist equipment for learners with disabilities and additional support staff, including signers. Non-teaching support staff and volunteers receive good training and support from tutors and managers. Many learners acknowledge that this support has significantly contributed to their achievements. Learners and staff benefit from the effective and well-promoted counselling service. Staff, learners and visitors to Swarthmore make good use of the coffee bar, which is managed well and promotes very good practice in healthy eating. Staff celebrate learners' achievements well and use the café and other areas effectively to exhibit learners' work and achievements.

33. Swarthmore effectively promotes equality of opportunity through its strong set of values, based on accepting all learners who wish to study. The organisation adopts a flexible approach to its work and promotes social inclusiveness well. Managers and the council members give high priority to appointing staff whose promotion of equal opportunities meet appropriate criteria. Tutors are skilled at recognising learners' abilities and use a wide range of appropriate teaching and learning methods which

effectively develop individuals' learning potential. Learners make a significant contribution to Swarthmore's learning programmes. They provide strong peer support and encouragement within classes and in the café. Some learners progress well to become volunteers, non-teaching assistants and tutors. Managers reinforce the values and procedures promoted in handbooks for learners, staff and tutors. Inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated and the rare incidences of harassment, bullying or discrimination are dealt with promptly and effectively. Equal opportunities' monitoring data are systematically collected on course enrolment forms and analysed to provide detailed information for the annual report to the council and the management team. Managers have recently used this information effectively and have prioritised the need to extend their courses to members of local minority ethnic communities. Early action has led to successful outreach research and new off-site courses.

34. However, many of Swarthmore's good practices in promoting equality of opportunity are not sufficiently planned or monitored. Managers recognised the weaknesses in the organisation's equal opportunities policy during a recent review. The policy effectively sets out Swarthmore's statement of intent in respect of equality of opportunity, but it does not adequately specify how this will be implemented. There are no established mechanisms for systematically monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the promotion of equality of opportunity. An action plan for equality and diversity was produced as a result of the review of the policy. However, proposed time periods for actions are too long. Staff accountability for each action point and the intended effect of planned action are not specified clearly enough. Similarly, staff promote Swarthmore's values well, but staff training in equal opportunities is inadequately planned and co-ordinated. Some staff have taken up relatively recent training in this area, but some have received no recent equal opportunities training.

35. Access to some areas of the building is poor for those with restricted mobility. After recent unsuccessful efforts to secure funding to improve access to all accommodation, managers continue to plan to make significant structural changes to the grade 2 listed building. Meanwhile, staff successfully accommodate most learners by moving courses to ground-floor classrooms when possible.

Quality assurance   Contributory grade 3

36. Managers have recently carried out a thorough review of their quality assurance practices and have developed and revised comprehensive monitoring systems. The resulting cycle for quality assurance, aimed at co-ordinating current practices, including observations of tutors, appraisals for staff, course evaluations and self-assessment, was introduced in January 2003. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this new development.

37. Many of Swarthmore's current quality assurance procedures are satisfactory. The internal verification of assessments of accredited programmes is thorough. This involves good standardisation of assessments and effective moderation of marked work. Learners on non-accredited courses in visual arts also benefit from these thorough practices in the standardisation and moderation of assessment of their work.

38. Managers monitor retention and attendance patterns well. They frequently review enrolment data and registers for each course, and take appropriate measures to improve the success of the course. These have included changing times of classes, dividing courses into modules and providing learners with additional support. Managers and staff value learners' views, collected through written questionnaires and informal visits to classes and the café. They appreciate learners' contribution to improving the quality of the programmes and respond appropriately to complaints and suggestions, frequently incorporating learners' good ideas. Most teaching teams share good practice, but managers do not provide sufficient mechanisms for tutors to share practice among teams. Some aspects of lesson observations are not thorough throughout all areas of learning. Most tutors receive comprehensive written feedback, but managers do not consistently use the procedure for identifying and planning actions for improvement. This procedure is not adequately monitored.

39. The monitoring of the effectiveness of learning programmes is weak. Managers do not adequately analyse or use data about learners' achievements, progress and destinations on leaving a course. They do not use data enough to form an objective view of their provision. The self-assessment report did not have self-critical judgements on achievement and progression. The self-assessment report prepared for this inspection was weak, especially for foundation programmes and leadership and management. Inspectors' judgements matched most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the analyses of the arts and ICT programmes. Some judgements against questions in the 'Common Inspection Framework' are missing, and not all areas are graded, as required. Some members of staff and the council are not sufficiently involved in the self-assessment process.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology   Grade 3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- very good level of support for learners
- good use of short courses to attract new learners

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment
- inadequate recording of learning and achievement

Achievement and standards

40. A satisfactory proportion of learners on ICT courses achieve their learning goals. In 2001-02, 62 per cent of learners who left an ICT course attained their target of a nationally recognised qualification. Some learners had significant barriers to learning and made considerable progress to achieve this aim. Approximately 84 per cent of learners who left in 2001-02 achieved the level 2 qualifications. However, some learners make slow progress towards their qualifications. For example, some learners are not set sufficiently challenging targets, and have been working towards the basic qualification for at least 12 months without completing sufficient units. Learners make satisfactory progress in developing personal and learning skills and many progress to courses in other areas of learning.

41. A significant number of learners complete the short 'taster' courses. Ninety-two per cent of the 53 learners on taster courses completed them in 2001-02. Learners achieve satisfactory standards in basic computing skills and many progress to ICT courses or other courses at Swarthmore.

Quality of education and training

42. Learners on the short 'taster' courses and those working towards qualifications receive a very good level of individual support. Swarthmore provides a high ratio of staff to learners in all workshops, employing additional support tutors and volunteers. Learners are well motivated and benefit from very individualised support. Tutors and support staff have a good knowledge of their subject and are skilled at giving learners detailed explanations on how to perform technical tasks. Most learners acquire ICT skills effectively and gain the confidence to carry out required tasks independently. Although tutors do not use written session plans for the workshops, they communicate well in planning each session. Some learners make good use of the UK online centre to supplement and reinforce their learning.

43. Swarthmore tutors have recently developed workbooks for learners working towards the basic computer literacy course qualification and the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) qualification. This involved the effective collaboration of all ICT staff. The workbooks are particularly well designed, containing well-written instructions and advice. Learners make good use of the materials during workshops and for re-emphasis at a later stage. Swarthmore provides satisfactory ICT resources. The range of software packages available to tutors meets the requirements of the accredited programmes. The self-assessment report recognises the need to update some of the computers.

44. The popular short courses in ICT are very successful in encouraging learners to participate in adult and community learning. The courses are well structured, providing effective training in initial computing skills at level 1 and 2. Tutors are skilled at adapting the level of work according to learners' current skills and experience in computing. They select an appropriate range of learning activities which gives learners a useful insight into computing and good attainment levels in specific skills. Some tasters are arranged for specific groups of learners in community locations and at the Swarthmore Centre. Tutors are particularly sensitive to the needs of these learners and provide appropriate learning activities and additional personal support.

45. The initial assessment process is inadequate. The initial assessment checklist is not sufficiently comprehensive. It does not adequately identify learners' ICT learning needs. Learners and tutors do not have enough information about learners' computing skills when they start the programme. Most learners start a programme at the same stage, regardless of their previous experience in computing. Some learners need to change their level of study, once they have started a programme. Learners' levels of literacy and numeracy are not systematically assessed when they join Swarthmore. Some learners' additional learning needs are not identified during the initial stages of their course. Approximately 10 per cent of learners are only identified as requiring additional support by the tutors several weeks after the start of their course. Swarthmore has recognised the weakness in initial assessments and have planned to introduce a short, computerised initial assessment course for all new ICT learners from September 2003.

46. Procedures for recording learners' progress and achievement are inadequate. Only learners who have identified additional learning support needs have an individual learning plan. Learners do not receive adequate support to identify long-term goals or short-term learning targets, or to record their progress towards these individual goals. Although most learners receive satisfactory verbal feedback about their progress and advice on improvement, this is not adequately recorded. Similarly, learners are required to complete their own personal work logs which give information about the tasks they have completed in the workshop sessions. These are often not completed and not checked by the tutors. On-going progress and achievement cannot be assessed. Swarthmore has acknowledged the need for systematic recording of individual learning and plans to introduce a new system from September 2003.

47. Management of the ICT programmes is satisfactory. Tutors manage operational aspects of the learning programmes well, through frequent formal and informal staff team meetings. The manager appropriately resolves issues raised by learners and staff. The ICT manager observes the ICT tutors and an action plan is agreed. However, action plans are not always fully implemented and are not linked to an individual staff development plan.

48. Staff provide very good levels of individual support for learners, particularly for those who have identified additional support needs, or have significant barriers to learning. Swarthmore provides good additional resources to support these learners, including laptop computers which are used effectively to support new learners in community locations.

49. Internal verification of the ICT programmes is satisfactory, and includes double-marking of sampled work. Marked work submitted to the awarding body is of a satisfactory standard. Learner's views are sought frequently and are acted on appropriately. For example, an ICT short course was recently restructured as a direct result of feedback from learners.

Visual & performing arts & media   Grade 1

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- very good attainment and achievement of qualifications
- good standard of teaching and learning
- very good standard of specialist resources
- good monitoring of learning
- well-managed provision

Weaknesses

- inadequate cleaning of accommodation and specialist maintenance of equipment

Achievement and standards

50. Learners' attainment of skills in visual and performing arts is very good. Most of them make particularly good progress in learning specialist skills, compared with their levels of ability when they join the programme. Learners consistently achieve a very high standard of finished work in options such as stained glass, painting, pottery, and jewellery. This work effectively combines technical competence with creative ability. Learners gain a good understanding of art, design and performing principles that effectively support their practical skills. Many learners join the arts programme with little or no previous experience. Learners in a singing lesson made good use of aural and technical skills to improve harmonisation and self-esteem in a creative and expressive way, exceeding their personal learning goals.

51. Retention and achievement rates on accredited courses are good. In 2001-02, 86 per cent of the 140 learners who left the courses achieved the appropriate qualification. Progression rates to other courses are also good; for example, learners on craft courses progress well through short courses, termly modules and 33-week courses.

Quality of education and training

52. Learners on all visual and performing arts classes benefit from particularly good standards of teaching. They are inspired by innovative sessions which effectively integrate the understanding of both theoretical and practical aspects of the arts, into project work and performance. Tutors are skilled at providing stimulating demonstrations that motivate learners. They effectively use exemplars of their own craft work to promote ideas and give learners confidence with materials. Learners participate well in the ensuing lively debates and discussions on techniques and develop good skills in solving problems when designing a piece of craft or artwork, or developing a creative performance. Learners receive a very good level of individual tuition and coaching, appropriate to their needs. Each learner achieves good rates of progress. Tutors

effectively develop learners' skills in appraising their own work and that of fellow learners. Learners also benefit from personal support from their peers, tutors and support staff. Learners build up detailed personal workbooks from samples, working diagrams and technical handouts and create a reference tool which they can use at home for further craft work.

53. Swarthmore provides very good specialist facilities in art and craft studios. The pottery studio is of a professional standard, with good technical support. The company has recently used additional funding to provide computers with sophisticated specialist software for design, research and media work. This equipment is used well. For example, in one art class, learners' work was scanned and mounted, creating professional-quality images. All tutors have high levels of expertise in their specialised area of visual or performing art and many have specialist qualifications in teaching adults.

54. Tutors provide learners with detailed and constructive feedback about their performance and practical skills throughout the programmes. The initial assessments are particularly thorough. Learners are fully involved in using these assessments to identify challenging and realistic learning goals. Learners on most programmes keep very good records of their progress: this includes those on courses which do not lead to nationally recognised qualifications. Tutors use sound assessment practices and monitor learners' progress effectively. They are particularly skilled at raising achievement levels among less-confident learners and in helping them to achieve their individual learning goals. Most learners make good use of course diaries and log books to record their work and monitor their own progress effectively using their individual learning plans.

55. Swarthmore provides a good range of courses in visual and performing arts. Courses in specialist subjects range from providing teaching for beginners, to developing higher-level technical and creative skills in advanced learners with many courses leading to accreditation. Courses are designed for learners who have a wide range of needs, for example, one course successfully combines learning in signing and crafts for signers and hearing-impaired learners. Some courses such as Arts Springboard are particularly well designed. They successfully integrate learners with learning and physical needs into general arts classes, enriching the learning experience for all learners and increasing their self-esteem. Swarthmore's arts programmes effectively serve members of the local community of all ages and include courses for children as well as for adults aged over 60 years of age. Good links with local schools and agencies have led to particularly successful courses in jewellery and other creative arts for young people who been excluded from school.

56. Staff are particularly sensitive to learners' individual needs, providing them with high levels of personal support. Learners receive satisfactory information about the requirements of each course and progression opportunities before joining, and during a brief induction. Learners' achievements are celebrated well, giving a high profile to their progress by displaying their work throughout the learning centre.

57. Specialist equipment in some craft areas is inadequately maintained. Some learners are prevented from using tools and equipment as planned because of delays in repairing

them. Learners' progress is also often held up in some areas when rooms are not cleaned promptly between sessions.

Leadership and management

58. Swarthmore's performing and visual arts programmes are well managed. The range of programmes has been effectively extended in response to identified gaps in the provision and by using innovative ideas for attracting more people to the arts. Communication among tutors and support staff is good. Tutors effectively apply the thorough systems for assessing and recording achievement. They receive good support and advice from managers.

59. Swarthmore has responded well to the need of some learners to continue practising their skills and crafts after completing their learning programmes. Learners therefore do not stay in classes when they no longer need training and guidance from tutors. Their progression to private, self-funding clubs at Swarthmore, such as pottery and life drawing, enables these learners to build on their ability to work independently and creates places for new learners. An experienced group from the 'folk fiddle' class has formed a band and performs locally. This extension of the provision is an example of good practice.

60. Equality of opportunity is promoted well in all aspects of the arts provision. For example, learners benefit from the 'fair fee' remission policy on leisure courses. Many learners with a whole range of learning and support needs are well supported when they join mainstream craft and performance classes. The individual care and opportunity given to these learners from their peers, tutors and managers ensures that everyone reaches their full potential.

61. Quality assurance arrangements are good. Procedures for standardising and moderating assessments are good. Internal verification is sound. Managers monitor the quality of teaching and learning well, making good use of lesson observations. Sound judgements are well linked to agreed criteria and tutors receive comprehensive and constructive feedback. The resulting action plans provide a good basis for individual and departmental staff development and training. Most staff's personal development needs are met, although the department does not have a budget specifically for training. Individual learning plans are effectively monitored. Meetings for all tutors within the programme area are used effectively to share good practice.

Foundation programmes   **Grade 3**

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- significant amount of good teaching
- wide range of courses in supported learning programme
- good development of learners' personal and learning skills

Weaknesses

- weak individual learning plans
- insufficient assessment and recording of progress
- insufficient development of some learners' literacy skills

Achievement and standards

62. Tutors and managers do not keep adequate records of learners' achievements. However, attainment is demonstrated through learners' work and the development of their social and communication skills. Attainment is satisfactory, or better in most cases. Learners develop good personal and learning skills through art, dance, music, ICT, woodwork, and exploring nature. Learners, including those with considerable learning needs, develop confidence and take on new challenges. They are able to carry out sustained work individually and in groups. They improve skills such as observation, sequencing and eye-hand co-ordination, as well as speaking and listening. They also develop practical and transferable communication skills, such as using the telephone. They recognise their own and one another's achievements and celebrate shared achievements well, through exhibitions and concerts. In some cases, teachers use photographs to show learners' achievements. Learners receive an in-house certificate for achievement. Retention on all foundation programmes is satisfactory and good on some individual programmes.

63. Learners' achievements in numeracy are good. Until September 2002, most of them worked towards basic achievement tests and demonstrated a steady improvement in levels of achievement. Learners make good progress in acquiring numerical skills, such as fractions, multiplication and division, at various levels. They use these skills well in practical situations. Some learners do not make enough progress in improving their literacy skills.

Quality of education and training

64. Most teaching is good to excellent and tutors enable learners to extend their range of skills. However, teaching is not so effective in the literacy classes. Most of the tutors in the supported programme are specialists in their curriculum area. They bring specialist expertise in the arts and counselling skills. They use resources and activities creatively to

provide a rich and varied learning experience. They are skilled at recognising learners' potential and successfully inspire and motivate learners to build on their existing skills. All tutors and support staff communicate particularly well with those learners with learning difficulties and disabilities and show that they respect and value the contribution of these learners to the programmes. They also effectively support learners in building their confidence and abilities in decision-making, independence and social development.

65. Tutors use specialist resources well to motivate and enhance learning. For example, in a pottery class, learners learned to use clay, templates and professional tools for projects. In a music class they used a wide variety of percussion and other instruments to develop sounds for different stages of a train journey. Other materials are also effectively used, for instance, coloured and patterned scarves were used in a dance class to assist rhythm and movement, and playing cards were used in a numeracy class to help learners develop and practise their number skills and concepts. Good, accessible ICT resources are used to support the development of basic skills. Accommodation is satisfactory, including the accommodation used for the off-site provision. Most tutors have good, relevant specialist skills and all have good teaching skills in supporting learners with diverse needs. Some tutors working with learners on the visual and performing arts-related foundation programmes have particularly good levels of specialist experience and expertise.

66. Swarthmore offers a wide range of courses in the supported learning programme. Learners benefit from the rich variety of courses. Many extend their learning across programme areas or within a particular course such as pottery or music. Learners make good use of the range of courses designed to develop their literacy, numeracy, ICT, and life skills. This includes the two off-site courses that currently take place in community day centres and the short 'taster' courses that provide learners with an effective first step to other courses provided by Swarthmore.

67. Individual support workers, volunteers and teaching assistants provide learners with a very good level of individualised support. They are skilled at helping learners participate to their full potential in all group activities, to learn relevant and useful skills and develop independent learning skills. Learners continue to receive the level of support they need when they progress to courses that are not part of the foundation programmes. Tutors and support staff are particularly sensitive and caring when they support learners through difficult personal circumstances. Although some aspects of this support are not sufficiently recorded, staff provide appropriate advice when they are able, or use the good links Swarthmore has developed with external support agencies.

68. Teaching staff are aware of learners' individual learning needs and help learners to improve their skills during learning sessions. However, individual learning plans are weak and are not used effectively to plan teaching and learning. In the supported learning programme, individual targets are often vague or not set at all. The development of specific skills for individuals is not well planned. In literacy and numeracy, learners' long-term goals, personal requirements and outside interests do not sufficiently inform targets, planning or the use of resources. Too much emphasis is placed on helping learners to achieve core curriculum targets, with insufficient attention given to helping learners use

these specific skills in a wider range of relevant contexts.

69. Tutors do not assess or record learners' progress enough. All learners take part in an appropriate verbal or written initial assessment, depending on the course they are joining. Although a valuable process for gaining some information about learners' abilities and development needs, these assessments are frequently not sufficiently diagnostic. Tutors do not adequately record the findings, or use them when planning teaching. Most tutors do not adequately assess and record learners' progress. Where records are kept, notes frequently refer to activities completed, rather than what was learnt. Records reviewing progress are too general and lack detail. Learners do not receive sufficient information about their progress towards their learning goals during reviews. Tutors do not use the reviews adequately to revise or set new targets.

70. Tutors do not adequately develop some learners' literacy skills. Initial assessment in literacy does not always accurately identify the level of learners' skills, or those which need to be developed. Learning activities are often not at a high enough level for learners. Tutors help learners to achieve a reading or writing task, but they do not effectively teach them to develop strategies to improve specific skills such as spelling or handwriting. Literacy tutors rely on worksheets too much when helping learners to develop their skills. Many worksheets are dull and do not stimulate learners' interests or motivation. Learners are not encouraged to bring in personal, literacy-related items from home or work. Managers have recognised this gap in expertise and have arranged for staff to receive appropriate training.

Leadership and management

71. Day-to-day management of the programme is good. Managers provide a well-structured programme which is responsive to the needs of staff and students. Managers continue to develop the provision, extend the range of opportunities for learners and identify ways to widen participation. They use their good links with local partners effectively, and successfully promote courses to current and new learners. However, managers are not adequately monitoring some aspects of the programmes, such as the use of initial assessments and individual learning plans. Staff development is inadequately planned. The department does not receive a specific budget for resources. Managers encourage staff training, but rely largely on tutors requesting it. There is no long-term planning for staff development.

72. Swarthmore's foundation programmes are central to its successful work in valuing diversity and promoting equality of opportunity. Managers and staff provide a good service in helping learners who are new to adult and community learning. Foundation programmes provide a useful first step for many learners. Managers are quick to provide additional resources to make this possible. For example, they successfully obtained additional funding for a special xylophone stick to enable an enthusiastic learner without adequate eye-hand co-ordination to participate more fully in a music class.

73. Some aspects of quality assurance are not thorough enough. Meetings with tutors are informal and not systematically used to evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes

or to plan improvements. Managers use data well for operational management, but they do not collect enough information about learners' achievements. Although managers observe tutors at least once a year, lesson observations do not adequately identify tutors' weaknesses, or areas of improvement. This process does not provide an adequate basis for planning tutors' development needs. Some staff provide good peer support and frequently share good practice, but this is not arranged for all tutors and support staff who are working on foundation programmes.