

INSPECTION REPORT

Coventry LEA

13 March 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

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

Coventry LEA

Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Scope of provision	1
About the inspection	6
Overall judgement	6
Grades	7
Key findings	8
What learners like about Coventry LEA	18
What learners think Coventry LEA could improve	18
Key challenges for Coventry LEA	19

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	23
Equality of opportunity	26
Quality assurance	27
Business administration, management & professional	31
Information & communications technology	35
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	39
Health, social care & public services	42
Visual & performing arts & media	46
English, languages & communications	49
Foundation programmes	53
Family learning	57

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Coventry Local Education Authority (LEA) is part of Coventry City Council (CCC). Coventry Adult Education Service (Coventry AES) is part of Coventry LEA. It is a former external institution, receiving funding from the Coventry and Warwickshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for the direct delivery of adult and community learning across the city. The adult education and children and family education services are located in the services for communities branch of the education and library directorate of CCC.
2. Coventry AES offers part-time programmes across the city to support the cultural, recreational, leisure and vocational interests of the community. These cover nine areas of learning and include accredited and non-accredited courses. In 2002-03, there were a total of 15,776 enrolments. Coventry AES uses a variety of locations including schools, community centres, churches and health centres. Many adult education venues are located in disadvantaged parts of the city.
3. The strategic direction of Coventry AES is managed through the strategic management team. Coventry AES has a head of service who reports to the head of services for communities. Below this there are three district managers who manage delivery across three districts, which mirror the city council's area co-ordination boundaries. There is a manager for special projects, who supports the head of service on new developments.
4. The inspection covered eight areas of learning. At the time of the inspection, there were too few learners in hairdressing and beauty therapy to be included in the inspection.
5. Coventry is a compact city of 300,000 people located in the West Midlands region. It is at the centre of the British automotive industry, and home to several major car manufacturers. In recent years the local economy has diversified into business services, research and development software production and financial services. Investment in the city has led to the development of new business parks, major city centre developments and new housing.
6. There are significant levels of deprivation in some parts of the city. In January 2004 the unemployment level in Coventry was 3.4 per cent, compared with a national average of 2.6 per cent. Sixteen per cent of the population are from minority ethnic groups, compared with 9.1 per cent nationally. The proportion of the population aged 60 or above, and of those with a limiting long-term illness, is similar to the proportion in the population as a whole.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Business administration, management & professional

7. Coventry AES has 138 learners in business administration, teacher training, adult

COVENTRY LEA

learner, and literacy and numeracy support qualifications, some of whom are enrolled on more than one course. The total number of enrolments in this area of learning is 178. There are 27 learners attending an adult learner support course at level 2 and 42 learners on a course for those providing practical support with literacy and numeracy. A further 51 learners are on an introductory programme for those wishing to teach adults. A course at level 3 for those teaching in further and adult education is attended by 11 learners. A total of 30 learners are attending stage 1 of a level 4 course for further and adult education teachers and a level 4, stage 3, course is currently being piloted with six learners. In addition, 11 learners are currently enrolled on a national vocational qualification (NVQ) administration course at levels 1 and 2.

8. Courses are offered at six different locations in the city and are taught by 10 part-time, fractional or full-time tutors. Learners attend weekly sessions which are held during the day or evening. The length of courses varies between 15 and 30 weeks.

Information & communications technology

9. For the current academic year there are 2,015 enrolments on information and communications technology (ICT) courses throughout the city. Accredited courses are between 10 and 36 weeks duration and account for 90 per cent of the provision. These are mainly basic and intermediate computer literacy courses and accounting. The range of non-accredited work includes one-off workshops, taster sessions or brief introductory courses and individually negotiated learning workshops, which do not relate to a qualification. ICT provision is overseen in each of the three districts by an academic manager, supported by one or two programme managers. The three academic managers, with a service management representative, form the ICT curriculum group, which provides strategic co-ordination and development of this area of learning. Programme and academic managers provide support and supervision to the tutors who are organised into district teams. There are 71 full-time and part-time ICT lecturers. Courses are offered in the day, evening and on Saturdays in 59 venues across the city. There are 23 venues in the west district, 18 in the central and 18 in the east. Sessions are run in community centres, schools, libraries and other community venues. In addition, laptop computers are used at a number of outreach venues.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

10. Coventry AES provides a variety of hospitality, sport and leisure courses. These include cooking of various types, fitness, swimming, self-defence, yoga, canoeing, healthy lifestyles, car maintenance, bridge, brickwork, bird watching, pet psychology and several types of dance. Courses are offered at beginners, intermediate and advanced levels. Some courses are targeted at specific groups such as those aged over 50, women-only swimming, men-only yoga and courses for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Very few courses offer external accreditation of learning. Learners enrol on courses for health improvement, personal development and social benefits. In 2002-03 there were 2,827 enrolments. Of these 81 per cent were women, 11 per cent were from minority ethnic groups and 8 per cent had a disability. A total of 78 per cent of learners completed their courses in 2003. Fifty-one out of 55 learners achieved externally accredited qualifications in either pool life guarding or yoga. Courses are held throughout the day, evenings, weekends and holiday periods. They take place in schools, community centres, church halls and health centres. Fifty-nine tutors are employed by the service on a part-time basis, most of whom are contracted for between one and eight hours a week. At the time of inspection, there were 2,647 enrolments from 1,965 learners.

Health, social care & public services

11. Coventry AES offers a range of early years and personal development programmes. In 2002-03, 511 learners enrolled on accredited courses including early years care and education, teaching assistants, counselling and community drugs awareness programmes. There is also a range of courses for older people, from claiming pensions to reminiscence events. Eighty-five courses are provided during the daytime and evenings at learning centres across the city. Most early years care and education and teaching assistants' courses comprise at least three hours each week. Personal development courses range from one to three hours each week and from 10 weeks to 35 weeks in duration. There are 32 teaching staff. Most tutors are part time. Short courses are offered each term. NVQ courses are offered from September to June and from January to December and NVQ assessment continues during July and August. Progression routes are available for those on early years courses. Most learners seen on inspection were women from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. All learners on early years courses are entitled to free crèche facilities.

Visual & performing arts & media

12. The provision for visual and performing arts is offered in 43 venues across the city including schools, community centres, church halls and day centres. In 2003-04, 272 courses were offered in the curriculum area: 22 of which were in music. The levels of study available range from entry to level 3 with approximately 50 per cent carrying Open College Network (OCN) accreditation. The subjects offered in visual arts include watercolour painting, lace making, pottery, clothing craft, photography, quilting, floristry, interior design, stained glass, machine knitting, creative embroidery, woodwork, and jewellery. Performing arts courses include guitar, keyboard, song writing, singing and harp.

13. There are currently 2,131 course enrolments, of which 1,764 are in visual arts and 367 are in performing arts. Most courses last for one term. Most of the learners enrol for three terms to further develop their skills. There are two full-time staff and 64 part-time staff.

English, languages & communications

14. Five hundred and twenty learners are enrolled on language programmes. Sixty-four courses were running in 11 languages in 20 centres, including British Sign Language (BSL) and Braille. Just over 40 per cent of these courses were in speaking Spanish. Other language courses include French and German, which have recently reduced in number, and Italian. Less commonly taught languages are Greek, Japanese, Urdu, Gujarati and Punjabi. The beginner's courses are of seven weeks duration, apart from at one centre. A certificate of achievement is issued to those completing each seven-week course, with enrolment on the next stage of the course immediately following completion. There are 19 courses for improvers in their second and third years of study, with OCN accreditation available. The seven BSL courses are working towards recognised qualifications. A curriculum group comprising senior managers with a linguistic background oversees the development of this area of learning, which is led by an academic manager.

Foundation programmes

15. Foundation programmes include literacy and numeracy courses, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and provision for adults with learning disabilities. Literacy and numeracy courses are offered city wide in a range of venues throughout each weekday, twilight sessions, most evenings and Saturday mornings. There are 1,300 learners enrolled on literacy and numeracy foundation programmes. Courses are run in conjunction with employers, family education, a national mental health charity, the library service and a range of voluntary and other organisations. Learners can choose programmes ranging from short introductory courses to more intensive study. They have opportunities to access nationally recognised qualifications such as national literacy and numeracy tests. Literacy and language support is also available on vocational and family learning programmes. A number of learning programmes have been piloted across the city. These include working with recovering alcoholics, ex-offenders, the homeless, people on a drug-rehabilitation programme and a work-based project to develop the language and literacy skills of nursery staff.

16. At the time of inspection, there were 975 learners enrolled on 92 ESOL programmes run at 30 sites across the city. Most classes are run in the central district, but are becoming increasingly common in other districts as refugees and asylum seekers are relocated away from the city centre. Courses are run throughout the day, twilight, evening and Saturday mornings. There is a range of courses for different ability levels run in the community and on the main site. The programme includes intensive provision, courses specifically for women, an 'into work' course for those seeking employment, ESOL ICT courses and a course for adults recovering from mental illness. Coventry AES has also developed programmes to support the ESOL needs of learners on childcare and family learning programmes. Sixty-five per cent of learners in ESOL classes are asylum seekers or refugees.

17. There are 443 learners aged between 19 and 70, who attend a wide range of courses for adults with learning disabilities. Courses are delivered at 15 centres across the city. Most courses run for two hours a week for 38 weeks. Many learners have a substantial learning programme as they attend several courses at centres. Most courses are run during the day with some evening provision. Learners come to the courses through referral by social services, from the specialist college in the city for people with disabilities or through self-referral. Since September 2003, courses for adults with learning disabilities have been located within their relevant area of learning. For example, using ICT to support self-advocacy is within the ICT area of learning. However, provision for adults with learning disabilities still retains a separate identity and is supported by the inclusive learning task group.

Family learning

18. Family education programmes are delivered by the children and family education service in partnership with Coventry AES. The programmes aim to support parents and carers in the education of their children. Some courses are targeted at the carers of pre-school children. Parents learn about how their children are taught at school and develop strategies and skills to help them at home. At the same time, many are attracted to continue their own learning. Courses offered include family literacy and numeracy, the 'footsteps' programme, together into learning, keeping up with the children and a range of other courses. Several of the courses receive OCN accreditation.

19. Approximately 850 learners are attending approximately 100 courses on 32 programmes. In 2002-03 over 1,300 parents and carers enrolled on programmes and 500 attended short workshops.

20. Most courses take place in the daytime. They are delivered in over 70 venues in nurseries, primary schools, adult education centres and community venues. Crèche facilities are often provided or children attend with their parents and carers.

21. The children and family education service is managed by a head of service. Programmes are delivered through three districts which each have a manager. It co-ordinates the work of six home/school teachers who have a curriculum focus, four family education programme managers who focus on pre-school families and parenting, and 14 part-time tutors.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	21
Number of inspection days	145
Number of learner interviews	811
Number of staff interviews	199
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	121
Number of partner/external agency interviews	4

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

22. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Leadership and management, quality assurance and equality of opportunity are good. Business administration, management and professional, ICT, health, social care and public services, visual and performing arts and media, English, languages and communications, foundation programmes, and family learning are all good. Hospitality, sport, leisure and travel is satisfactory.

GRADES

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

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

Business administration, management & professional	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

Information & communications technology	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

Health, social care & public services	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

Visual & performing arts & media	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

English, languages & communications	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

Family learning	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

23. **Achievement is good across all areas of learning.** There are good pass rates on some accredited courses, in particular in ICT, yoga and swimming, and early years education. Learners gain a good understanding of theory in teacher training and sports courses. In ICT, beginners who have little or no previous knowledge make good progress in developing their computer skills. Learners have a good mastery of basic vocabulary and grammar on beginners' language courses. In visual arts, learners work independently on large scale artefacts, and instrumentalists gain sufficient confidence through music lessons to perform in groups outside the classroom. Many adults with learning difficulties on foundation programmes gain new practical skills such as computing and woodcraft. There is very good development of parenting skills on the early years and family learning courses. Achievement of qualifications in languages is poor and declining.

24. **Retention is good in half of the areas of learning seen.** Overall retention is good in health and social care. In ICT, sports and leisure, and visual and performing arts, retention is good and improving. On most foundation courses, retention is satisfactory and improving, but is poor in general certificates of secondary education (GCSE) mathematics and English. Retention has been poor in languages for the past two years, but is now showing an improvement following a change to shorter 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
Business administration, management & professional	0	3	5	1	0	0	0	9
Information & communications technology	2	4	18	5	1	0	0	30
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	1	4	15	7	1	0	0	28
Health, social care & public services	0	12	8	6	0	0	0	26
Visual & performing arts & media	2	4	13	4	0	1	0	24
English, languages & communications	3	3	7	4	0	0	0	17
Foundation programmes	3	10	25	12	4	0	0	54
Family learning	1	5	3	1	1	0	0	11
Total	12	45	94	40	7	1	0	199

25. **Teaching and learning are good in all areas of learning.** Seventy-six per cent of lessons seen were good or better. Teachers use a wide and appropriate variety of teaching methods on many courses. In ICT there is good whole class teaching using a data projector and smart board. Individual support in visual and performing arts and in languages is particularly effective. In classes for adults with learning difficulties, tutors provide a range of challenging activities that take account of complex needs.

26. **Language teaching resources are good.** The service has implemented a policy for ensuring a minimum level of audiovisual resources in every language classroom. This is a good achievement in a service which uses many different venues. The Braille classroom has a Braille machine. Training is available to help tutors use the electronic whiteboard to enhance language learning. The languages manager has developed a good website with ICT resources for language tutors.

27. **Family learning tutors are particularly well qualified and experienced.** All have a teaching qualification and at least half have additional qualifications in family language and literacy, early years education, the education of adults or childcare. Most also have considerable experience of teaching in primary schools. This ensures an accurate understanding of school curriculum and current teaching methods.

28. **Programmes are well developed to reflect a wide range of needs across the city.** In business administration, there is a clear strategy to develop staff expertise and qualifications to support the introduction of new courses. There are imaginative initiatives to widen participation on ICT programmes. Many programmes are located in areas of very high deprivation and some classes take particular account of the needs of asylum seekers and people with health and social problems. An initiative in partnership with libraries is dramatically increasing access to ICT. Hospitality, sports and leisure courses are offered in 24 subject areas across the three districts, and many offer progression from beginners, to intermediate and advanced levels. Courses are targeted to engage learners from disadvantaged wards and increase participation from minority ethnic groups, male learners and those with disabilities. The visual arts programme is extensive and caters for a range of interests and abilities. A very good range of language programmes in 11 languages, including Greek, Japanese, BSL, Braille and a substantial Spanish provision, are all spread across the city. A good programme of three Asian languages has recently been introduced in response to local demand. Well-designed programmes enable adults with learning difficulties to engage in the wider community. Courses in ESOL are particularly effective in meeting the needs of women, those seeking employment and adults recovering from mental illness.

29. **Good support for learners is a strength in half of the areas of learning.** In business administration, management and professional courses, tutors support learners well through regular tutorials, telephone and e-mail contact. Detailed and constructive feedback is given to learners on teacher training programmes on their practical teaching. On the hospitality, sports and leisure programme, learners receive particularly helpful course information. Health and social care tutors carry out a thorough initial interview to ensure course applicants are placed on the correct level of programme. Bi-lingual

speakers are readily available for support. Work-placement supervisors match learners' practical work with the theory they are studying. On programmes for adults with learning difficulties, learning support assistants, volunteers and carers are well managed and provide support at a level that matches learners' needs. On ESOL and literacy and numeracy provision, crèche support is good.

30. There is insufficient use of the target language by tutors in many language lessons.

In classes taught by native speakers, there is a reluctance to use the language being learnt for social conversation and class management. This reduces opportunities for learners to develop their skills.

31. On business administration, management and professional courses, and on literacy and numeracy programmes there is insufficient use of ICT. Access to textbooks for many business administration learners is inadequate.

32. The assessment and monitoring of learning is weak in five of the eight areas of learning inspected. In ICT, some initial assessments are unstructured, poorly recorded and take too little account of the learner's personal circumstances. There is no diagnostic testing of learners' computer skills, insufficient reviewing of progress and only brief summative records on learners' files. In hospitality, sports and leisure, initial assessment is not used to formulate individual learning plans in a coherent way, and learners' progress is not monitored sufficiently. On health and social care programmes, initial assessment does not adequately identify learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs. Learning aims in visual and performing arts are often vague and progress towards them is infrequently recorded. There is no system for recording learners' attainment on non-accredited language courses. Reviews on literacy and numeracy programmes are too infrequent, sometimes poorly recorded, and often reflect the learners' enjoyment rather than what they have learned.

Leadership and management

33. There is strong strategic direction. The services for communities service plan and associated Coventry AES's three-year strategic plan, effectively prioritises provision for socially and economically disadvantaged adults. Emphasis is also placed on widening participation as part of the social inclusion agenda.

34. There is good staff development. Full-time and part-time tutors are kept informed of the wide and comprehensive range of internal and externally available training programmes, and take up is good. Emphasis is placed on providing training to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Through staff development reviews and meetings with managers, tutor's future training needs are effectively identified. Individual training action plans clearly identify the training needs, but in some cases are not detailed as to how and when training will take place.

35. Coventry AES has very effective partnership arrangements. Successful partnerships have been developed with community, charity, voluntary organisations and other training and educational providers. Coventry AES has worked well with partners to deal with

barriers to participation. Participation rates for target groups such as people from minority ethnic groups, disabled people and men have consistently improved. In partnership with other organisations, learning programmes have been specifically designed to meet the needs of different groups such as those with mental health problems and asylum seekers.

36. Coventry AES has effective strategies to widen participation and tackle social inclusion. The service has set itself a clear agenda to deal with inequalities and to widen participation. Programmes reflect a clear focus on recruiting learners who are usually hard to reach and to support other learners. The service has a specific objective to promote learning to disadvantaged groups living in the most deprived wards in the city and in this it has been particularly successful. Between 2002 and 2003, participation rates in priority deprived neighbourhoods increased from 7 per cent to 9.2 per cent of the population and progression rates to further courses are good in most areas. The fee policy effectively reflects the service's priorities. Most learners receive financial support for fees and there is free childcare. Teaching and support is sensitive to learners' needs and celebrates different cultures, although opportunities are often not taken to introduce diversity into lessons.

37. There is good use of data and target-setting to attract under-represented groups in learning. Course enrolment data are routinely collected on ethnicity and disability. Data relating to retention and achievement are analysed in many ways including by gender, ethnic group, area of learning and local district. The results are used to set realistic targets to deal with issues relating to equality and diversity, for example to improve enrolment and retention rates for male learners on parenting courses.

38. The arrangements for quality assurance are effective. There is a well-documented service-wide strategy for the observation of teaching. Tutors who receive a less than satisfactory observation grade take part in individual sessions with their programme manager. Key weaknesses and other areas for improvements are developed through individual and group meetings of tutors and managers. Staff reviews are carried out and a staff development plan is developed. Observation grades in all areas are comparable with those given by inspectors during the inspection. Observations are also used to identify and deal with poor accommodation and resources. End-of-course reviews which are carried out by tutors, are self-critical and comprehensive. Issues identified are dealt with effectively through programme and district managers. Staff receive useful and regular briefings every two months and these include information on a range of quality issues and the analysis of a wide range of data.

39. There is good use and analysis of an extensive range of data. Whole service data are used to benchmark against other authorities, recent inspection grades and compliance against targets. Detailed information is made available to curriculum groups on population comparison, minority ethnic participation, the success rate of learners receiving support and satisfaction surveys. This information, including end-of-course evaluations, is used by curriculum groups and tutors to check targets and to assess the quality of their courses and programmes. The analysis of data has led to improvements in course delivery.

40. **The self-assessment process is thorough and accurate.** Curriculum groups work with a range of relevant information and data to develop an initial draft which contributes to an overall self-assessment report for the service. Strengths and weaknesses, priorities for action and three years of data benchmarks are used to develop the quality development plan. The quality development plan is clearly focused on priorities for action on curriculum and service-wide issues. Progress of the plan is monitored each term and actions are taken to ensure targets are met. The self-assessment report and quality development plan are used to form the three-year strategic plan which clearly details the service's broader targets for enrolment and funding. Most staff are aware of planning and strategic objectives, and have participated in the development of the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report recognised many of the strengths and weaknesses which were identified by inspectors.

41. **Some of the accommodation is unsatisfactory for learning.** Tables and chairs are sometimes not available at the correct height. In some cases venues are not clean or are noisy, too small or do not benefit from natural light. The quality and accessibility of ICT facilities in some centres is unsatisfactory. An accommodation strategy has been produced and funding for improvement is currently being sought.

42. **There is insufficient promotion and awareness of equal opportunities in the curriculum.** Managers receive some equal opportunities training, but there is no mandatory training for all staff. Systematic checks on compliance of learning materials are not routinely carried out. Learners have insufficient understanding of some aspects of equality of opportunity. The topic is usually covered at learners' induction but there are insufficient measures to enable learners to deepen their understanding of equality and diversity issues after this. In some areas, initial assessment does not clearly identify personal needs or set individual learning plans. Course information and publicity leaflets do not always display positive images of people to promote effectively the council's social inclusion agenda. The service recognises that this aspect of its provision is underdeveloped and action to establish equal opportunities in the curriculum is included in the current development plan.

43. **There are insufficient arrangements for gathering the views of all learners.** Learner satisfaction surveys are carried out towards the end of their programmes, but the process does not include learners who have left the course early. There is no systematic process for analysing information and taking action in response to issues raised by learners. On some courses learners do not receive feedback on the results of the satisfaction survey.

44. **There is insufficient sharing of good practice between tutors and managers.** The frequency and quality of tutor liaison varies within subjects and districts and in some cases does not take place across districts. In one area of learning in one district, the range of teaching methods used by tutors is more extensive. In other areas of learning, tutors produce good resources and documents, but these are not shared with tutors who teach the same courses.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- strong strategic direction
- good staff development
- very effective partnership arrangements
- effective strategies to widen participation and tackle social inclusion
- good use of data and target-setting to attract under-represented groups in learning
- effective arrangements for quality assurance
- good use of an extensive range of data to improve quality
- thorough and accurate self-assessment process

Weaknesses

- some inadequate accommodation and resources
- insufficient promotion and awareness of equal opportunities in the curriculum
- insufficient arrangements for gathering the views of all learners
- insufficient sharing of good practice

Business administration, management & professional

Strengths

- good standard of work by learners
- good teaching and learning
- good tutorial support
- good development of new programmes

Weaknesses

- insufficient access to computers and textbooks for many learners
- insufficient initial advice and guidance for learners on NVQ administration programmes
- little sharing of good practice by teacher/trainers between districts

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- good and improving retention and achievement
- good flexible teaching and coaching to meet individual needs
- very effective development of learners' skills
- good use of ICT to widen participation

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment for some learners
- insufficient sharing of resources by tutors
- inadequate arrangements on the computerised accountancy course
- poor accommodation and resources in some centres

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Strengths

- good attainment on most courses
- good retention on most courses
- good teaching and learning
- broad range of provision that caters for diverse interests of learners
- good initial advice and guidance

Weaknesses

- weak monitoring and recording of learners' progress on non-accredited courses
- poor accommodation and resources
- insufficient opportunity to share good practice
- insufficient communication

Health, social care & public services

Strengths

- good retention
- good achievement on OCN courses
- good teaching and learning
- very effective support for learners
- successful management of development

Weaknesses

- insufficiently thorough initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills

Visual & performing arts & media

Strengths

- good retention
- good attainment
- good teaching and learning
- good individual support in classes
- good range of courses in visual arts

Weaknesses

- some poor facilities
- insufficient recording of learners' progress
- insufficient dissemination of good practice

English, languages & communications

Strengths

- very good development of language skills
- good teaching and learning
- good language teaching resources
- good range of language programmes to meet community needs
- well-led and well-managed area of learning

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement
- insufficient use of target language by tutors in many lessons
- no system for recording learning outcomes on non-accredited courses

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- good retention and achievement
- good teaching and learning
- good support for learners
- well-designed courses for adults with learning disabilities
- good range of programmes in ESOL
- effective strategies to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of ICT in literacy and numeracy
- ineffective review practices in literacy and numeracy
- inadequate arrangements to share good practice

Family learning

Strengths

- good development of skills for helping children
- good progression on to other courses
- good teaching and learning
- well-qualified and experienced staff

Weaknesses

- low recruitment on to some courses

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT COVENTRY LEA:

- making new friends
- good progress - 'I can't believe how much I've learnt'
- learning about music from different cultures
- Coventry AES's positive attitude - 'if there are enough of you interested, we'll put on a course'
- day time courses so we don't have to come out in the dark
- support by tutors and volunteers for learners who have poor vision
- better understanding of the deaf community through contact with deaf tutor
- 'offering a welcome break from caring for my very ill father'
- being able to e-mail other deaf friends
- accessible courses near home
- learning about creative activities to use in the nursery
- the free crèche facilities
- 'the course has helped me value my role as a mother more'
- friendly and supportive staff
- varied activities in class
- e-mail contact with tutors
- the enjoyable informality of the learning sessions - a lot of fun with an important social aspect
- easy to enrol
- 'understanding what my child is doing at school so I can help'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK COVENTRY LEA COULD IMPROVE:

- having copies of the course handbooks to take away with us
- better access to computer facilities - 'we have wasted so much time setting up laptops and having no printers'
- removing the clash between ICT and language courses
- more choice of daytime courses, especially in the afternoon
- bigger chairs for adults to sit on
- less noise from the playground and crèche
- the cleanliness of some rooms
- more people in the class to make it more interesting
- opportunity to borrow musical instruments
- less-intensive course

KEY CHALLENGES FOR COVENTRY LEA:

- provide suitable accommodation and resources across the provision
- increase the promotion and awareness of equality of opportunity in the curriculum
- improve the sharing of good practice
- improve initial assessment, monitoring and recording of learners' progress

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 2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- strong strategic direction
- good staff development
- very effective partnership arrangements
- effective strategies to widen participation and tackle social inclusion
- good use of data and target-setting to attract under-represented groups in learning
- effective arrangements for quality assurance
- good use of an extensive range of data to improve quality
- thorough and accurate self-assessment process

Weaknesses

- some inadequate accommodation and resources
- insufficient promotion and awareness of equal opportunities in the curriculum
- insufficient arrangements for gathering the views of all learners
- insufficient sharing of good practice

45. There is strong strategic direction. The services for communities service plan and associated Coventry AES's three-year strategic plan effectively prioritises provision for socially and economically disadvantaged adults. Emphasis is also placed on widening participation as part of the social inclusion agenda. Both plans support the CCC corporate plan and associated community plan in relation to improving educational quality and meeting individual educational needs. Coventry AES's strategy links well with local and national LSC priorities. Appropriate consultation with partners and Coventry AES's staff takes place as part of the process of formulating the three-year development plan. Monitoring of the plan is part of the quality assurance process and effectively involves senior managers and a key council member of the CCC.

46. Coventry AES produces a detailed report each year on the progress made against achieving the goals of the three-year report. However, the action plans are not fully integrated with the service's plan and have inadequate systematic monitoring. Coventry AES recognises this and is currently implementing a new performance management framework to improve consistency. The mission and core values are included in a handbook that is given to all full-time and part-time tutors. Staff understand and are committed to the overall aims of Coventry AES. Targets are not routinely set, other than those for staff training and development that link to Coventry AES's objectives.

47. There is good staff development. Full-time and part-time tutors are kept informed of

COVENTRY LEA

the wide and comprehensive range of internal and external training programmes, and take up is good. Effective use of a database and learning plan is made by a staff development co-ordinator to manage the training. There is good support for staff to allow them to attend professional development. As part of their contract, all staff are allowed paid time to attend development activities that are pro rata to the hours they work. Training is available at a range of times during the day and evening. Emphasis is placed on providing training to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Three-quarters of all teaching staff have an appropriate teaching qualification. Approximately a quarter of the remainder are working towards a nationally recognised qualification in teaching adults. Curriculum lead groups ensure that tutors attend appropriate training to develop their subject specialism. Most tutors are observed teaching at least once a year. Through staff development reviews and meetings with managers, future training needs are effectively identified. Individual action plans clearly identify the training needs, but in some cases are not detailed as to how and when training will take place.

48. Coventry AES has very effective partnership arrangements. As part of its commitment to educational excellence, CCC has set objectives that encompass partnership development, and the achievement of educational services' effectiveness, efficiency and quality. Successful partnerships have been developed with community, charity, voluntary organisations and other training and educational providers. Surveys of partners generally show a good level of satisfaction with the relationships formed. Coventry AES has developed partnerships that target local neighbourhoods which previously had limited provision. Effective use is made of available data to identify relevant areas of deprivation.

49. Coventry AES has worked well with partners to deal with barriers to participation such as times of courses, availability of childcare facilities and the distance from learners' homes to an appropriate venue. Participation rates for target groups such as people from minority ethnic groups, disabled people and men have consistently improved. In partnership with other organisations, learning programmes have been specifically designed to meet the needs of different groups. For example, learning opportunities have been made available at a local hospital for adults who have mental health problems. Within CCC, partnerships have been developed to deliver literacy and numeracy training for staff. Partnerships have been successful in offering taster courses, for example in ICT in local libraries. Partnerships also meet the needs of asylum seekers.

50. Links with further and higher education are satisfactory. In one case, undergraduate volunteers are used well to support tutors in classroom activities.

51. Communication is satisfactory. Regular formal meetings are held from which minutes are circulated to appropriate staff. An informative newsletter is regularly sent to all tutors. A tutor briefing is held in September and termly for all new staff. Staff who have various levels of experience and knowledge, contribute to the work of tasks groups to develop areas such as marketing and inclusive learning. Subject meetings are held, but these do not take place in every curriculum area. Line managers meet with staff and make good use of informal methods of communication. Some part-time staff are less well informed. Recent staff surveys have highlighted the need to improve

communication with all tutors. Within hospitality, sport and leisure there is some insufficient communication.

52. Coventry AES has a clear strategy and action plan to support learners who have literacy, numeracy and language needs. Tutors have a satisfactory understanding of how to refer learners for support. The process is effectively managed and co-ordinated. Assessment of learners' needs is carried out satisfactorily when they start on programme and they can also identify their own needs. However, this is a weakness in health and social care. In a few cases learners' needs have been successfully identified, but not followed up. Learners can have individual support in class or join a relevant workshop. In family literacy sessions good use is made of team teaching by a subject tutor and literacy tutor. Coventry AES provides interpreters for learners when appropriate. Further assessment and support for learners who have dyslexia is satisfactory. Staff who give the support are appropriately qualified. Literacy, numeracy and language tutors have benefited from core curriculum training. The use of current methods of teaching numeracy in schools has helped parents transfer their knowledge to their children to improve their numeracy. At the time of inspection, 428 learners were receiving additional support.

53. The collection and use of management information is satisfactory and meets the current information needs of managers. This contributes to overall satisfactory curriculum management. However, access to information from a central database is not readily available in all districts. Targets for learner numbers and enrolments are set and monitored. Effective comparison with similar organisations and other nationally available data takes place. There are very few targets and little trend analysis for retention and achievement at programme level. Some recent analysis has been carried out to compare different centres. Monitoring of attendance is satisfactory. Use of data for quality assurance and equality of opportunity purposes is good.

54. Coventry AES uses a range of accommodation within venues such as schools, community centres and private training providers. Apart from one venue, all accommodation is shared and managed by other organisations. Some of the accommodation is unsatisfactory for learning. In some cases venues are not clean or are noisy, too small or do not benefit from natural light. Learner and staff surveys have highlighted dissatisfaction with some accommodation.

55. The provision of ICT facilities varies. In some cases they are satisfactory and some have state-of-the-art equipment. In a few cases computers are not suitable for the software or there is little or no access to ICT facilities, including the internet. This limits the opportunities for learners to develop their ICT skills and carry out relevant research using the internet. At some centres, access to textbooks is unsatisfactory. Tables and chairs are sometimes not available at the correct height. In one case a tutor provided the equipment for a practical class. Coventry AES has recognised many of these issues in its quality development plan. An accommodation strategy has been produced and funding for improvement is currently being sought.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 2**

56. Coventry AES has effective strategies to widen participation and tackle social inclusion. Equality of opportunity is effectively promoted to access a wide range of learning opportunities by local communities. Coventry AES has set itself a clear agenda to deal with inequalities and to widen participation. It has developed its own equality and diversity action plan which draws together objectives from its three-year strategic and quality development plans. These place a strong emphasis on equality of opportunity at a strategic level and prioritise access to learning. The themes of widening participation and tackling social inclusion through community-based learning, in partnership with a wide range of organisations, provide a powerful strategic framework for Coventry AES. Programmes reflect a clear focus on recruiting learners who are usually hard to reach and to support other learners, for example, by training childcare staff for the many crèche and nursery facilities at learning centres.

57. Coventry AES has a specific objective to promote learning to disadvantaged groups who live in the most deprived wards in the city and in this it has been particularly successful. Between 2002 and 2003, participation rates in priority deprived neighbourhoods increased from 7 per cent to 9.2 per cent of the population, and progression rates to further courses are good in most areas. Coventry AES operates from over 80 centres, many in local communities where levels of social deprivation are high, offering learners a wide range of appropriate courses within easy access of their homes. The fee policy effectively reflects Coventry AES's priorities. Most learners receive financial support for fees and there is free childcare. There are specific courses to encourage learners back into learning and for learners from minority ethnic groups, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, men and women, older learners, unemployed people, single parents, and refugees and asylum seekers. Teaching and support is sensitive to learners' needs and celebrates different cultures, although opportunities are often not taken to introduce diversity into lessons. While the proportion of the population from black and other minority ethnic communities in the area is 16 per cent, in 2003 Coventry AES recruited 23 per cent from black and minority ethnic groups. The proportion of learners with disabilities from the Asian communities is particularly high.

58. There is good use of data and target-setting to attract under-represented groups into learning. Course enrolment data are routinely collected on ethnicity and disability. Data relating to retention and achievement are analysed in many ways including gender, ethnic group, area of learning and local district. The results are used to set realistic targets to deal with issues relating to equality and diversity, for example, to improve enrolment and retention rates for men on parenting courses.

59. Coventry AES recognises the importance of offering an environment with good physical access for all users and has made appropriate progress to meet the full requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2002 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. An access survey of all buildings has been carried out and proposals put forward to comply with current legislation. Access for people with disabilities is satisfactory in most centres. Some venues have limited access above the ground floor level and, when necessary, Coventry AES makes arrangements so all

learners can attend their preferred course.

60. There is insufficient promotion and awareness of equal opportunities in the curriculum and Coventry AES recognises this. Action to encourage equal opportunities in the curriculum is included in the current development plan. Although staff receive details of annual priorities for equality and diversity, induction programmes for new staff do not include an introduction to equality of opportunity. Managers receive some equal opportunities training, but there is no mandatory training for all staff. Systematic checks on compliance of learning materials are not routinely carried out. However, a group of learners who have learning difficulties are modifying and simplifying service documents through the use of graphics, simple words and clear layouts. The group has updated the adult education disability statement and is also involved in presenting their work at local conferences. The composition of the staff team reflects the minority ethnic backgrounds of the local population, but not at senior manager level.

61. Learners have insufficient understanding of some aspects of equality of opportunity. The topic is usually covered at induction, but promotion in some areas is poor. Many learners cannot clearly remember this part of their induction. Tutors rarely refer to equal opportunities again during the course. There are insufficient measures to enable learners to deepen their understanding of equality and diversity issues after induction. In some areas, initial assessment does not clearly identify personal needs or set individual learning plans. Learners with disabilities and other additional learning and support needs receive good levels of support to help them to complete their studies successfully. However, course information and publicity leaflets do not always display positive images of people to promote effectively the council's social inclusion agenda.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 2

62. The arrangements for quality assurance are effective. There is a well-documented service-wide strategy for the observation of teaching. Key staff are trained to carry out observations and procedural documents are thorough and well presented. The assessment documents which are used by observers are clear and refer to the key questions in the 'Common Inspection Framework'. Observers provide detailed comment on key strengths and weaknesses, action points are clearly stated and the tutors' needs are identified. Tutors have a formal opportunity to comment on the process and the actions they will take to improve their teaching. Tutors who receive a less than satisfactory observation grade take part in individual sessions with their programme manager. Key weaknesses and other areas for improvements are developed through individual and group meetings of tutors and managers. All staff who are involved in carrying out observations have moderation meetings where grades and comments are reviewed and discussed. Staff reviews are carried out and a staff development plan is developed. Observation grades in all areas are comparable with those given by inspectors during the inspection. Observations are also used to identify poor accommodation and resources. Recent action has been taken to move classes to a more suitable venue and programmes adapted to suit the resources available. In another session inadequate health and safety practices and insufficient recording of learners' progress were identified. The health and safety practices were improved and the tutor

COVENTRY LEA

received training in recording progress. The class was observed again and the issues had been resolved. End-of-course reviews which are carried out by tutors are self-critical and comprehensive. They provide detailed information on a wide range of factors that influence the course, including resources and learner support needs. Tutors are able to make detailed comment on the successful aspects of the course and changes in content and approach to their teaching. Issues identified are dealt with effectively through programme and district managers. For example, one course had a low retention rate. One of the reasons identified was the high number of enrolments at the start of the course. Enrolment numbers are now set at a lower level and retention has improved. Staff receive useful and regular briefings every two months and these include information on a range of quality issues and the analysis of a wide range of data.

63. There is good use and analysis of an extensive range of data. Whole-service data are used to benchmark against other authorities, recent inspection grades and compliance against targets. Detailed information is made available to curriculum groups on population comparison, minority ethnic participation, the success rate of learners receiving support and satisfaction surveys. This information, including end-of-course evaluations, is used by curriculum groups and tutors to check targets and to assess the quality of their courses and programmes. Managers aim to capture all of the retention and achievement data and good progress is being made on a project for the recognition of achievement on non-accredited courses. The analysis of data has led to changes in course delivery. In two centres, enrolments on ICT programmes were low and at another attendance data indicated low retention. Managers moved the classes with low learner numbers to other sites and the programmes continued. Demographic information indicated that a high number of asylum seekers were settling in a specific area of the city. A management review identified the need for an increase in the number of ESOL programmes in the area and this has taken place successfully. The data on retention of learners on language courses were identified as a concern. Feedback from learners indicated that the courses were too long. Short modular courses were introduced and learners now progress through the modules. Retention has increased on these courses.

64. The self-assessment process is thorough and accurate. Curriculum groups work with a range of relevant information and data to develop an initial draft. This information includes observation grades, a learners' satisfaction survey, course tutor evaluation, and data on participation, retention, achievement and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities. The report is then moderated by representatives from each curriculum group, strategic managers and the co-ordinator for staff development, to form an overall self-assessment report for the service. Strengths and weaknesses, priorities for action and three years of data benchmarks are used to develop the quality development plan. To contribute to the plan, managers have recently introduced subject area reports which include well-prepared and detailed information on common groups of subject specialisms. The quality development plan is clearly focused on priorities for action on curriculum and service-wide issues. Progress of the plan is monitored each term and actions are taken to ensure targets are met. The self-assessment report and quality development plan are used to inform the three-year strategic plan which clearly details Coventry AES's broader targets for enrolment and funding. An operational plan is

developed and forwarded to elected members detailing performance management and following through on key council objectives. In general, staff are aware of planning and strategic objectives, and have participated in the development of the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report recognised many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors.

65. Internal verification and assessment is satisfactory in most areas. There is satisfactory sampling, and portfolios show that there is regular internal verification. Assessors hold team meetings which include standardisation meetings and they are set targets by internal verifiers. Action is quickly taken to correct issues identified in external verifier reports.

66. Coventry AES carries out satisfactory audits on accommodation. Community centre site inspections are carried out to a detailed checklist and reinspection is carried out after development work has been completed. A rolling four-year programme includes audits of health and safety policies, management of health and safety, inspection arrangements and training. However, there has been insufficient investment for accommodation improvements in the past. This is now improving and funds are allocated to capital works and improvements to meet Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 requirements. The approach to health and safety is thorough. Many staff have completed risk assessment training and all district managers have completed health and safety training. There are frequent opportunities for staff to work towards awareness programmes in manual handling, display screen and working alone. Learners are given information on emergency procedures and first aid provision.

67. A satisfactory survey is carried out on staff. It is comprehensive and provides managers with information to gauge the participation and effectiveness of staff. The survey indicates that staff are fully involved in providing solutions to a range of issues, and that generally there is a good response to management arrangements. Staff provided a less positive response to communications across districts. Managers respond to the issues raised during the survey. For example, staff indicated that they could not complete their workloads on time. Managers regard this as an indicator that requires attention and have planned to introduce a stress audit.

68. There are insufficient arrangements for gathering the views of all learners. Learner satisfaction surveys are carried out towards the end of their programmes, and learners who have left the course early are not included. In their analysis of the satisfaction survey Coventry AES recognises this as an omission. Tutors make notes in registers detailing why some learners have left the programme, but there is no systematic process for analysing information and taking action in response to issues raised by these learners. Learners comment favourably on their programmes, but they are less positive on the advice and guidance they receive at the end of their programmes. In some courses, learners do not receive feedback on the results of the satisfaction survey.

69. There is insufficient sharing of good practice between tutors and managers. The frequency and quality of tutor liaison varies within subjects and districts and in some cases does not take place across districts. In one area of learning in one district, the range

COVENTRY LEA

of teaching methods used by tutors is more extensive. In other areas of learning, tutors produce good resources and documents, but these are not shared with tutors who teach the same courses. For example, comprehensive lesson plans are used in one district, but in other districts they are inadequate and do not clearly identify teacher and learner activity. However, in language and health and social care, tutors regularly share good practice. Language tutors have attended Saturday morning training sessions.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	138	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good standard of work by learners
- good teaching and learning
- good tutorial support
- good development of new programmes

Weaknesses

- insufficient access to computers and textbooks for many learners
- insufficient initial advice and guidance for learners on NVQ administration programmes
- little sharing of good practice by teacher/trainers between districts

Achievement and standards

70. There is a good standard of work by learners. Learners' coursework and NVQ portfolios show a good level of attainment. All learners keep learning journals that demonstrate good development of reflective learning and self-assessment. Learners' contributions in class show good understanding of background knowledge concepts and learners are able to relate these well to practical situations. Learners confidently deliver well-analysed presentations to their peers. Group work tasks involving co-operative learning by peers often produce perceptive responses.

71. Retention and achievement are improving on most courses. During 2001-03 retention for the adult learner support course improved from 38.3 per cent to 92.8 per cent, and achievement improved from 34 per cent to 53.5 per cent. Retention on the level 3, stage 1 course for teachers in further and adult education improved from 83.9 per cent in 2001-02 to 86.9 per cent in 2002-03, and achievement improved from 76.5 per cent to 81.5 per cent over the same period.

72. Although retention and achievement on the level 3, stage 2 course for teachers in further and adult education declined during 2001-03, success rates over that period are satisfactory. However, 14 per cent of those who started in 2002-03 did not complete coursework or teaching practice by the required date. Most of these learners continue to have tutorial contact and are expected to complete the qualification by May 2004.

Quality of education and training

73. Teaching and learning are good. Most tutors make effective use of varied activities that promote learner interaction. There is extensive use of skilful questioning techniques to develop ideas and encourage the involvement of all learners. Tutors frequently set tasks for learners that require them to reflect on, and draw examples from, their practical experiences. In most lessons, summaries are used well to reinforce discussion points. There is effective team teaching by tutors on the adult learner support course. There is good informal peer support. Learners make good use of experiences gained in their own work in collaborative activities that enable the sharing of ideas and information. Learners value the clear explanations given by teachers and the frequent checks on their understanding. Learners maintain a high level of interest and engagement throughout most sessions.

74. Tutorial support is good. Learners have regular individual tutorial meetings at least once each term and can arrange additional tutorials on request. Learners who need additional help are able to make telephone contact with tutors between classes and many tutors provide support through e-mail. Detailed feedback is given to learners on teacher training programmes following observations of their teaching, together with clear guidance on actions for improvement. The specific needs of learners are identified by tutors early in the course and are responded to effectively. The tutor of one learner who has dyslexia, arranged for him to have the loan of a laptop for the duration of the course. If learners withdraw from their course, tutors make contact to ascertain the reason for withdrawal and, where possible, support arrangements are made for the learner to complete the qualification, if necessary at a later date.

75. All staff have appropriate relevant experience. Those who do not currently have level 4 teaching certificates are being sponsored by Coventry AES to take the appropriate qualifications.

76. Most accommodation is fit for purpose. One room is well equipped with an electronic whiteboard and projection facilities. However, some rooms have minimal facilities, although tutors can obtain additional equipment if needed. Some rooms are very small and in some, the noise from outside distracts learners and can make it difficult for them to hear. If rooms are not accessible to learners with disabilities, alternative rooms are arranged.

77. There is frequent assessment of learners' work. Tutors mark and return work promptly and give constructive and positive feedback with clear guidance on how to enhance work that has not met the requirements. However, learners who produce good work often receive little guidance on how to improve further. Some feedback is written on slips of paper that could become detached from the learner's work.

78. An appropriate range of qualifications for teachers in further and adult education is in place and there are good progression routes on teacher training programmes. The new range of qualifications for volunteers/tutors in literacy and numeracy is being

developed. Many of the learners who attend teaching and adult learner support programmes work in Coventry AES. Learners can progress from NVQ level 1 to NVQ level 2 in administration.

79. There is insufficient access to computers and textbooks for many learners. Computers are rarely available for use in the rooms where classes are held, although tutors can make arrangements for a small number of laptop computers to be available for use during lessons. Learners have few opportunities to develop their internet research skills or to experience the use of information and learning technology to enhance teaching and learning. On many courses learners can have access to computing facilities elsewhere in the centre, but this is usually at specified times that do not always coincide with class times. Learners are not always aware that they have access to computers and very few of those who are, actually use them. Books can be borrowed by learners. However, at some centres, access to the book stock requires learners go to another venue at specific times that do not necessarily coincide with their classes or other commitments.

80. There is insufficient initial advice and guidance for learners on NVQ administration programmes. Information sheets make insufficient reference to the requirement for learners to attend regular work placements, and initial advice and guidance is not effective in helping learners to explore the implications of a regular commitment to work placement. Some learners' progress is delayed when they have difficulty in finding work placements or where work placement arrangements fail.

Leadership and management

81. Development of new programmes is good. A clear strategy exists to develop staff expertise and to enhance tutors' qualifications to enable new courses to be introduced. Approximately half the tutors are taking additional qualifications to enable them to teach at a higher level. Effective team teaching by staff on the adult learner support course enables tutors to learn from each other. In one district, teacher/trainers jointly tutor courses. They meet regularly to plan and develop the new programmes and to share ideas on how to teach each topic. However, there is little sharing of good practice by teacher/trainers between districts. The range of teaching methods used by tutors in one district is more extensive and is a better model for aspiring teachers than the more restricted range of methods observed in the other district. The amount of information given to learners, for example about the organisation and workload requirements of the course, varies significantly between the two districts. The amount of information contained in tutors' lesson plans and schemes of work in one district does not provide a good model for trainee teachers to emulate.

82. Internal verification is satisfactory on most courses. Good internal verification records are kept and the appropriate internal verification procedures are in place, including assessor observations and standardisation. However, internal verification arrangements for the newly introduced level 4, stage 3 course are not yet fully operational.

COVENTRY LEA

83. There is regular contact between programme and centre managers and tutors. Programme managers in each of the three districts liaise on the scheduling of courses and the range of provision. However, communication of curriculum group decisions relies on dissemination by the appropriate district representative, for example at team meetings which some part-time staff are unable to attend. The minutes of the curriculum group meetings are not distributed to other managers.

84. Staff have a good awareness of Coventry AES's goals relating to equality and inclusiveness. Equal opportunities awareness is included in learners' induction programmes. There is good coverage of equal opportunities within the curriculum, as a discrete topic within schemes of work and as an aspect that learners are encouraged to consider in relation to their programme. Managers use data to identify under-represented groups in order to target marketing activities more effectively. Participation by learners from minority ethnic groups and learners with disabilities increased in 2002-03.

85. Learners on the adult learner support course are required to submit a 500 word narrative explaining their reasons for wishing to join the course to ascertain whether the learner has any specific literacy support needs. In one case, the learner was given support by staff in another centre. From the beginning of their courses, learners are required to produce written work on a regular basis. This is used as a means of identifying support needs.

86. Tutors regularly evaluate lessons and write comments on lesson plans to remind them of any adjustments needed for the future. Learners on adult learner support courses complete satisfaction questionnaires on completion of each unit within the programme. These and other responses from learners are very positive.

87. The course review process includes review of achievement of previously set targets, although there is limited use of quantifiable measures. Data are used by managers to monitor the performance of courses and to identify actions needed. One example is the introduction of a referral/deferral policy to enable consistent action to be taken to support learners who need longer to complete their qualifications.

88. The self-assessment report identified the weaknesses in provision and the actions that are proposed to resolve them. Most of the strengths in provision were also identified. The teaching grades in the self-assessment report are similar to those given at inspection. The draft quality development plan includes actions to deal with the key weaknesses identified during inspection.

Information & communications technology**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	2015	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good and improving retention and achievement
- good flexible teaching and coaching to meet individual needs
- very effective development of learners' skills
- good use of ICT to widen participation

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment for some learners
- insufficient sharing of resources by tutors
- inadequate arrangements on the computerised accountancy course
- poor accommodation and resources in some centres

Achievement and standards

89. The overall retention for 2002-03 is good at 78 per cent, and over the past three years has steadily increased. Pass rates in 2002-03 for learners taking accredited qualifications are good at 81 per cent.

90. Achievement on the non-accredited courses is good with learners achieving their personal learning goals. Adult learners who have little or no previous ICT knowledge or skills make good progress in developing their computer skills. Learners are well motivated to learn.

Quality of education and training

91. Eighty per cent of lessons observed were good or better, 17 per cent were satisfactory and only 3 per cent were unsatisfactory. Tutors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and the teaching is very well matched to the learners' individual needs. Tutors use a good range of teaching and coaching styles to meet the different levels of learning needs in dedicated classes and workshop provision. There is good whole-class teaching using a data projector and smart board or a networked computer demonstration. The learners' outcomes are good. There is effective individual guided practice with good handouts. Learning is checked through a range of well-prepared worksheets, and practical exercises. In addition there are good informal question and answer sessions in large or small group situations and critical analysis of each other's work. Teaching methods are carefully adjusted according to the type of learners in the

COVENTRY LEA

group. Tutors demonstrate a very flexible style to meet the diverse level of learners in the non-accredited provision. Working relationships between tutors and learners are excellent. Learners particularly value the specialist skills of the tutors and the very good flexible support provided. Lessons are well structured and make good use of the resources.

92. There is very effective development of learners' skills. Learners are making significant progress and in a short space of time they can operate the computer and produce good work. Learners gain new skills, broaden their knowledge and enhance their confidence in using computers. Tutors use a good range of methods to monitor progress. A series of mock examinations helps learners gain confidence to take and pass examinations. Learners are progressing to higher level work and are achieving qualifications, which for some is their first qualification. Several learners have become tutors with Coventry AES and they value this recognition of their skills. Learners on advanced digital imaging programmes are producing graphics of a very good technical standard. They can create, control, change and manipulate digital images with ease from a variety of sources. Learners use ideas linked to their individual interests in painting, gardening, golf or photography.

93. There are imaginative initiatives to widen participation. Coventry AES is particularly successful at developing courses which effectively meet the needs and interests of a variety of learners. It works well with a large number of partners to deliver ICT learning opportunities at a large and diverse number of venues across the city. Many programmes are located in areas of very high deprivation. Learners in these environments are positive and well motivated to achieve and exceed their learning goals. Classes also take place in a range of venues in local communities. Some classes specifically accommodate asylum seekers and people with health and social problems. Learners appreciate the opportunity to attend classes close to their homes or work. They enjoy using the frequently updated and enhanced ICT facilities. Coventry AES is working very closely with libraries, and through this partnership is dramatically increasing the access to ICT. In every library in the city learners are offered free 'drop-in' sessions for nine hours of tailored supported learning to meet their own individual learning goals. The times of the tutored sessions are responsive to learners' needs. This approach is proving to be very effective in reaching learners who might not attend other locations and a considerable number are progressing on to further courses. Most learners begin to use their new skills, particularly use of the internet and e-mail, almost immediately and value being able to do so. This project is having a significant impact on the number of learners enrolled on accredited courses. There are numerous successful ICT projects which are specially designed to attract people from all communities and target groups.

94. The identification of previous knowledge and experience is inconsistent. Frequently initial assessments are short, informal interviews in small groups, and there are poor records of the interviews. Tutors do not always identify sufficiently the learners' personal circumstances which then impacts on the learners' attendance and performance. Some learners enrol and only attend a few training sessions. There is no diagnostic testing of learners' computer skills and some learners have to abandon their programme and move to a lower level. The information on many learning plans is ineffective and often only

includes broad learning aims or the course title. There is insufficient ongoing in-depth reviewing of progress and only brief summative records on learners' files. Learners are unclear about future actions. Tutors are aware of the need for accurate initial assessment and some are currently evaluating some new documents and an improved procedure. Induction is very brief and the quality of the information about equality, bullying and harassment and its impact on online learning is poor.

95. There are few opportunities for tutors to meet others who are involved in delivering the same programme and other ICT sessions across the city. There are high volumes of learning resources in use by tutors who deliver the same accredited courses. Many tutors accurately identified a need for additional handouts and exercises and are spending much time and effort on the development of resources. Some of the poorer quality resources are having an adverse impact on the learning. The documents and learning resources being used inhibit consistent learning experiences when learners change programmes or tutors. Approaches to lesson planning and development of the schemes of work and records of individual sessions vary from tutor to tutor. Some are excellent, while others are minimal.

96. Retention is low and declining on the accounting programme. In the past two years it has fallen from 60 per cent to 51 per cent. Poor attendance is not effectively managed, and learners do not always complete the homework in the set time. There are different versions of the computerised accountancy software being used in different centres and some do not reflect the current commercial standard. In one centre the learners' progress is poorly recorded and in some instances, no entry has been made for 10 weeks.

97. There is a small number of centres which have poor rooms, with inadequate chairs that do not meet health and safety requirements. There are no facilities for large screen display to help tutors demonstrate to the whole class. Some of the accommodation is in a general state of disrepair and generally untidy. Paper-based resources are disorganised and difficult for learners to access. There has been no printing facility for six weeks in one centre. At many centres there is a good range of ICT equipment where Coventry AES has prime responsibility for the centre. There has been an improvement in the computing resources over the past two years. Many of the community learning centres have new flat screen computers, a colour printer, a black and white printer and a scanner as standard equipment. Laptop computers are used to improve facilities and access at new locations.

Leadership and management

98. Tutors and managers are very committed to improving the provision and significant improvements to computer facilities have been made in the past two years. There are regular team meetings. Full-time tutors and managers have been involved in the self-assessment process. Many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors were identified in the most recent self-assessment report. Observation of learning is carried out annually, but due to a heavy workload, one district has not carried out the process for this academic year. Another district has not given feedback to the tutors who

COVENTRY LEA

were observed two months ago. Staff take part in a range of staff development training activities and they have a satisfactory range of professional qualifications. Staff are well supported by Coventry AES and value the personal development training. There is a strategy for literacy, numeracy and language support and courses are provided in many of the centres. However, learners are not formally screened to identify their literacy and numeracy needs. The curriculum resources are satisfactory. The style and the qualities of the same lessons delivered by different tutors are quite different. There is insufficient checking of staff awareness of equality of opportunity and its application to online learning. Learner feedback is collected at the end of the programme and some tutors are starting mid-term evaluations. There are few opportunities for tutors to meet and share good practice in similar areas of delivery across districts.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	1965	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good attainment on most courses
- good retention on most courses
- good teaching and learning
- broad range of provision that caters for diverse interests of learners
- good initial advice and guidance

Weaknesses

- weak monitoring and recording of learners' progress on non-accredited courses
- poor accommodation and resources
- insufficient opportunity to share good practice
- insufficient communication

Achievement and standards

99. In a wide variety of subject areas, learners develop good standards of attainment. They improve their knowledge, skills and abilities at appropriate levels. They develop a good understanding of the theory and underlying principles associated with their courses. Many learners increase their confidence and are able to apply their skills outside of the classroom. For example, in car maintenance learners find out how to change the oil in their cars. In Indian and Chinese cookery they prepare meals for friends and family. In brickwork several learners have been able to carry out home improvements and repair work. In exercise, fitness and dance classes, in addition to improving fitness, flexibility and co-ordination, learners recognise and appreciate the wider social, personal and health benefits gained. These include relief from ailments as well as reducing stress. One learner was using the dance class to offset the effects of a degenerative disease.

100. The retention is good on most courses. On courses leading to external awarding body qualifications in yoga and swimming, the retention and achievement levels are over 90 per cent. On most of the non-accredited courses retention levels have increased over the past three years. There are poor retention levels on some courses and some have been closed and others have been amalgamated. The average retention levels on courses have increased from 72 per cent in 2002 to 78.3 per cent in 2003.

Quality of education and training

101. Teaching and learning are good and meet the needs and interests of learners. Tutors are caring, supportive and conscious of learners' health and safety. On all courses learners are consulted by tutors to identify personal learning goals, and on sports-related courses to identify particular ailments or conditions that may affect their individual performance and progress. Lessons are organised and planned effectively to engage all learners in challenging, stimulating and enjoyable activities. A variety of teaching methods is used, including demonstrations, aural explanation, and individual, paired and group working. In cookery learners are encouraged to sample, discuss and review their own and other learners' performance. In some swimming classes, more-able learners are encouraged to offer support to others in order to improve techniques and confidence. In dance, yoga and fitness classes, tutors make good use of appropriate music to facilitate the desired learning environment and to motivate learners. In sailing classes tutors make good use of an interactive touch board. In the better lessons tutors use their voice projection, pitch and tone to emphasise key learning points and focus learners' attention. Most tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced and are well supported by the LEA to improve their professional development. Most of the rooms are fit for purpose. Centres with crèche facilities enable learners to access courses.

102. A very broad range of courses are offered to cater for learners' diverse interests. Courses are offered in 24 subject areas and many offer progression from beginners, to intermediate and advanced levels. Courses include various types of dance, fitness, cookery and yoga, pet psychology, brickwork, canoeing, car maintenance, healthy living and bird watching. Courses are targeted to engage learners from disadvantaged wards and increase participation from minority ethnic groups, male learners and those with disabilities. There is a good geographical spread of courses across the three districts. Accredited provision is offered in pool life guarding, yoga and sailing.

103. Learners receive good advice and guidance. Taster sessions, bite-size courses and pre-enrolment advice sessions are provided for prospective learners. Learners receive information packs when they enrol which contain details of policies and procedures and learners' entitlements. Course information sheets have been produced which detail course aims, outcomes, practical requirements and any necessary resources, as well as course times and duration. Good use is made of health screening questionnaires to determine the appropriateness of courses for learners and to modify lesson content to accommodate all learners.

104. Some of the centres offer poor accommodation and resources, with dirty and dusty floors, no natural light and insufficient space for the number of learners. In car maintenance there are too few resources to effectively meet the needs of learners. In half of the lessons observed, accommodation and resources factors affected the quality of the learning experience.

105. There is weak monitoring and recording of learners' progress. None of the learners have detailed individual learning plans. There is limited initial assessment which is not

used to formulate individual learning plans in a coherent way. There are insufficient mechanisms to monitor learners' progress. Too few of these mechanisms are applied consistently in all subject areas or across all districts. Coventry AES is aware of deficiencies in the monitoring of learners' progress and has developed a pilot project to improve this. A variety of tutor-devised methods have been developed across the three districts. The primary method used to inform learners of their progress is by informal and unrecorded aural feedback.

Leadership and management

106. Courses are well marketed in each of the three districts. Staff briefing newsletters are circulated to all staff every other month to keep them informed of developments at Coventry AES. There are good processes for quality assurance. All tutors are involved in end-of-course evaluations and these, with the analysis from learner questionnaires, are used for planning. All tutors are observed annually with written feedback which is used to identify areas for improvement and staff development needs. District managers meet on a monthly basis to review provision and to identify actions that need to be taken. The curriculum management team meets on an annual basis to evaluate overall provision in the area of learning and to plan the following year's provision in accordance with the strategic plan.

107. Insufficient opportunities exist for the sharing of good practice. None of the tutors have had the opportunity to meet with other tutors in the same curriculum or subject areas to identify and discuss good practice. There is no sharing of information between tutors who work in different districts. Tutors who wish to attend professional updating on courses organised by their professional associations are supported by the LEA. Planned staff development activities are not accessed by all part-time staff.

108. There is insufficient communication between management staff, tutors and learners. Coventry AES has identified clear strategic priorities and targets, although some district and centre managers are not aware of these and they are not effectively communicated to tutors and learners. Learners are consulted on their opinions of Coventry AES by a satisfaction survey, but the outcomes from this in terms of actions taken are not clearly fed back to the learners.

Health, social care & public services**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	511	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good retention
- good achievement on OCN courses
- good teaching and learning
- very effective support for learners
- successful management of development

Weaknesses

- insufficiently thorough initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills

Achievement and standards

109. Retention is good. On NVQ courses the average retention rate for 2000-03 is 80.3 per cent. The retention rate for learners recruited on to OCN courses is 82 per cent in the same period, with some learners still on programme and making good progress towards achievement.

110. The retention rate for learners on the early years pre-NVQ course is 99 per cent and for learners on the early years NVQ at level 3 course, it is 79 per cent. For both NVQ and OCN learners recruited in the current year, there is full retention.

111. One-third of the learners are working towards OCN awards and their achievement is good. Seventy-three per cent of these learners achieved their learning aim between 2000 and 2003. There is particularly good achievement for learners on the pre-NVQ course at 89 per cent. All learners are making good progress towards completion of their award.

112. Achievement for most NVQ learners is satisfactory. The achievement rate for this group between 2000 and 2003 is 67 per cent. The largest group of learners on an NVQ programme are working towards a level 2 qualification in early years. Sixty-one per cent of these learners have achieved the qualification.

113. Learners develop good personal, learning and parenting skills and demonstrate these skills in the classroom, work placement and with their own families, particularly managing their children's behaviour and supporting them with school work. Learners on personal development programmes fully understand the issues on drugs awareness, multi-cultural awareness and ageing. Most learners progress through the excellent range of

short courses to NVQ level 2 and 3. Many of the tutors studied with Coventry AES, some from introductory level. They have progressed to qualifications in teaching and assessing.

Quality of education and training

114. Seventy-seven per cent of the teaching observed during inspection was good or better. Methods of teaching are very good and are adapted to suit most of the learners' needs.

115. Lessons are well planned. Those for the NVQ at level 3 are very good, with interesting activities, and have clear timescales. A variety of teaching methods are used to maintain the interest of learners. Many sessions include theory and practical work which are linked well. Some sessions include specific activities to carry out in the nursery. Learners enjoy the lessons and are enthusiastic and well motivated to learn. Good portfolio-building sessions are included. Learners portfolios are very well organised and are individual to the learner. Tutors evaluate each teaching session. The newly appointed tutor/assessors make good use of these evaluative activities to reflect on their teaching practice. Tutors make good use of subject specialists on the NVQ at level 3 teaching assistants' course, such as a mathematician introduces the national strategy for mathematics at key stage 2 and 3, and a Gujarati teacher who teaches at advanced level teacher teaches personal development units to Gujarati learners. Attendance at learning sessions is good at 100 per cent for many courses. All absences are followed up by the course tutor. Differing needs and abilities of individuals are not identified in lesson plans for level 2 NVQ early years teaching sessions. None of the plans include how differentiation is to be covered for NVQ at level 3.

116. Learners are well supported by tutors and supervisors, from initial enquiry to completion of their award. Interviews of potential learners are thorough and include useful information about the learner's experience in childcare and their professional aims. This information is effectively used to place learners on the correct level of programme. Tutor/assessors inform learners fully about the training programme and give out a booklet which extends the learning throughout the programme. Learners are given information on outcomes and employment prospects. Learners may join the courses in September and January and good initiatives are in place to maintain the learner's interest until the chosen course starts. Short courses are available on study skills, NVQs and employment opportunities. Learners value these courses as sound preparation for learning at level 2. When learners progress from introductory level to an NVQ programme, the induction is reinforced.

117. Lessons are well timed to fit in with learners' parenting responsibilities. For older people, lessons are planned around a lunch club, and for minority ethnic groups in local settings which have a strong link to their community. The thorough initial interview gives learners effective advice before enrolment. Bi-lingual speakers are readily available for support on all programmes. Support for learners with language needs is particularly good. Learners on introductory childcare courses are given the opportunity to attend an

COVENTRY LEA

ESOL course to familiarise themselves with the specific vocabulary for children's social and emotional development. Following the taught session, the tutor gives learners information for the next week. The learners take it to the ESOL adviser who ensures that they understand before the childcare lesson. The ESOL tutor visits learners and tutors during the childcare teaching sessions and is familiar with their needs and progress. The learners from Gujerat stated that their preference was that the course be delivered by a native speaker of their own language and this was organised. Work-placement supervisors have details of the course content and weekly topics. They match the practical work well with the current background knowledge sessions for the NVQ. A learner with a visual impairment attended an interview determined to succeed. The tutor understands her needs well and enlarges all handout and assessment materials for the learner. The learner is now enjoying voluntary school work with good prospects of employment. The availability of free childcare for all learners is vital to their successful learning and work-placement experience. All learners have monthly progress reviews involving all parties. Some tutors, especially for level 1 learners, arrange additional portfolio-building sessions during school holidays.

118. Assessment practice is satisfactory and takes place frequently. Assessors plan assessments jointly with learners and prepare them well for their next assessment. Assessors carry out very detailed observation of the learner's performance and record it well, referencing to units and elements achieved and knowledge demonstrated. Use of oral questioning is effective to confirm learners' understanding of their practice. Feedback is given verbally and in writing and is detailed and constructive. Written questions are set according to the needs of individuals. At the end of each assessment, the assessor draws up a clear assessment plan for the next assessment and agrees the date for it. There is an easy-to-follow monitoring document that clearly shows the learner's progress towards the achievement of the award. Each learner and their tutor/assessor have a copy. Being able to identify their progress motivates learners to accomplish more. Internal verification is satisfactory. Assessors are observed frequently and portfolios are verified as units are completed. Internal verification documents are completed appropriately. Overall, reviews are satisfactory but some do not always clearly identify the learner's progress. Some of the target-setting is imprecise.

119. Initial assessment is not sufficiently thorough and does not adequately identify learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs unless they disclose them. Assessment of level 2 and level 3 learners' literacy and numeracy needs is not an integral part of the initial interview or assessment and they are often not identified until the learner has settled into their main programme of learning. Curriculum and programme managers have identified this weakness and have started to prepare assessment and learning materials for literacy and numeracy linked to childcare. When literacy and numeracy support is identified it is put in place quickly. Some learners receive support in the same centre as their main programme.

120. All learners are aware of routes of progression. Some of the tutor/assessors completed their qualifications with Coventry AES and are good role models for learners. Older learners who are on a course which is run in conjunction with a lunch club have gone on to computer courses. The Gujerati learners are taking English lessons. A mature

learner on an introductory childcare course has completed an internationally accredited computer course. If level 2 learners are unemployed at the end of their qualification, Coventry AES arranges sessions for jobsearch and interview skills. Overall, accommodation is satisfactory, but low chairs and tables in one centre are unsuitable for classroom activities. No access to ICT or the internet in one centre limits opportunities for independent research by NVQ at level 3 learners. The range of resources for tutors' use is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

121. Coventry AES has managed the growth in participation well. Since 2000, enrolments have increased significantly. In 2000 there were 292 learners and this has increased to 1,342 in 2003. There has been marked increase in enrolment of people with disabilities and learning difficulties on to personal development programmes. Over half the learners on personal development programmes have disabilities or learning difficulties. Coventry AES has met the learners' needs well. It has recruited new tutors, some of whom were previous AES learners, and is supporting these new tutors well to complete teaching and assessing qualifications. Many tutors only work for two or four hours each week. Their expertise in working with learners with additional needs is valued. This takes place each term for tutors on OCN 10-week courses. Good co-ordination of ESOL and childcare programmes ensures learners are well prepared for their learning sessions. The strategy to allow tutors to specialise in specific subjects enhances learning at level 3. The service is very responsive to local needs. The need for more childcare has been met by recruiting and training more learners for early years care and education level 2, to provide staff for local nurseries, to ensure courses are available at introductory level and to prepare learners for their level 2 programme. Training for teaching assistants to level 3 is available at five centres across the city. Some of the personal development courses are offered in response to requests from local communities.

122. The quality of provision is assured with twice yearly appraisal and observation of tutors. Members of staff are aware of planning and strategic objectives. They understand policies and procedures and participated in the self-assessment report which identified similar strengths to those identified during inspection. The weakness identified during inspection was not identified as a weakness during self-assessment but was identified as a priority for action. Strategies are in place to resolve the weakness. There is satisfactory sharing of good practice. Assessor and moderator standardisation meetings are used to improve and standardise learning materials in addition to assessor and internal verification. They have recently standardised course information for learners, the workplace agreement and guidance on progression.

Visual & performing arts & media**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	2131	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good retention
- good attainment
- good teaching and learning
- good individual support in classes
- good range of courses in visual arts

Weaknesses

- some poor facilities
- insufficient recording of learners' progress
- insufficient dissemination of good practice

Achievement and standards

123. The retention in visual and performing arts courses is good. The retention has significantly improved over the past two years, and in 2002-03 reached 82 per cent.

124. There is good attainment across the area of learning. Learners make good progress in acquiring technical skills in visual arts and music. Those learners who re-enrol on courses continue to progressively develop their specialist and personal skills. Some learners report increased confidence and are now able to carry out ambitious projects within and outside the classes. In visual arts, some learners work independently on large scale artefacts and some work commercially. On a stained glass course, the learners had progressed to complex tasks after completing a 10-week course. Most had made artefacts for their homes, including decorative door panels, insets for screens, and ornate glass lampshades. In lace making, learners are producing an excellent standard of work. One hearing impaired learner who is recovering from a serious illness valued the wider benefits of a watercolour course in aiding his recuperation. After a short time, some instrumentalists have gained sufficient confidence to perform as part of a group. These activities extend outside the classroom and learners play in schools, residential homes and in informal concerts. A few learners in music have gained sufficient expertise to enable them to be appointed as tutors.

Quality of education and training

125. The teaching and learning are good. In the lessons observed, 79 per cent were good or better. Learners make good progress inside and outside of the classroom. In the better lessons there is effective use of the time available. Learners in music quickly develop skills in instrument playing and new learners are effectively integrated with groups of more experienced learners. Learners support each other and there is a great deal of mutual respect. Learners are able, and encouraged, to work independently.

126. Individual support in classes is good and tutors work hard to ensure that individuals make good progress. The relatively small class sizes allow a high level of individual attention for learners. The advice and guidance given to learners enables them to complete tasks well. There are good opportunities for tutors to check understanding as work progresses. Learners are motivated by their tutors and speak positively of their learning experiences. Tutors are aware of the need to differentiate and are responsive to the wide range of experiences learners bring to their classes. Tutors provide challenging activities to develop a range of skills. Many learners in visual arts continue to develop their skills over a number of years and are able to complete complex tasks. In music, learners acquire a wide repertoire and independent learning is encouraged by the development of aural skills and theory. Some lesson plans are not consistent. Some tutors have clear learning aims and reflect on learning and progress for future planning. Preparation by other tutors was less well developed. In visual arts, tutors do not use the learners' work as a resource to demonstrate the interpretation of ideas, the application of techniques or to develop the group's skills in critical analysis.

127. In visual arts there is a good range of courses. The programme is extensive and caters for a range of interests and abilities. Courses are available in a wide range of centres at different times to encourage participation from the local community. However, the range of music courses is narrow and a more responsive provision is being developed through partnership programmes. Coventry AES has established effective partnerships with a range of community partners. These include the Coventry branch of a national health charity, as well as initiatives for people with learning disabilities. One centre allows individuals to set their own learning goals and record their own achievement through peer and self-assessment. The cultural diversity of the community is not reflected in the content of most courses.

128. The quality of pre-course information and advice is satisfactory. In visual arts there is a good range of course information sheets to inform learners about the course aims, teaching methods, assessment methods and the resources and equipment they will need to support their learning. There is effective support for bilingual learners in clothing craft. The specialist clothing tutor has the language skills to communicate with the group in Punjabi, Gujarati and English.

129. In many courses, there is insufficient recording of progress. A variety of methods is used to assess learners' progress, but few are used effectively to assess individual starting points and to monitor progress towards agreed learning goals. Where targets and

COVENTRY LEA

learning aims are agreed, they are often vague and progress towards them is infrequently recorded. On the OCN crafts course, the tutor maintains records and provides written feedback for individuals. Assessment is used effectively to promote learners' progress and to maintain motivation.

130. Some poor facilities are used for the delivery of visual arts courses. Ergonomics are poor in clothing craft, lace making, and music keyboard skills. Clothing students do not have access to tables of a suitable height for cutting fabric and patterns. Learners in music stack two chairs together to sit comfortably at the keyboard. In some venues, no allowance is made for the organisation of space and equipment to support specialist practical activities and there are significant delays to the start of some sessions. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced. Fifty-nine per cent have teacher training qualifications.

Leadership and management

131. The management structure has recently been changed and is now more in line with the strategic aims of Coventry AES. There are new strategies in place but it is too early to comment on their overall effectiveness. The strategic objectives of Coventry AES are not translated to the programme or to specific tutor targets, with the exception of retention and achievement targets. To improve communication, the music curriculum manager has introduced termly meetings and subject-specific training. Tutors value the opportunity to meet and this improves communication.

132. There is insufficient dissemination of good practice through quality assurance processes. The good practice identified in lesson observation is not disseminated to teaching staff. Internal verification is not effectively used to structure, plan and deliver assessment activities throughout the programmes, in addition to verifying assessment outcomes. There are good mechanisms for the support and development of staff. However, in some cases, part-time tutors have an inadequate induction. Teacher training qualifications are offered free of charge to part-time tutors. Part-time tutors are also paid for time spent planning their programmes.

English, languages & communications**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	520	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- very good development of language skills
- good teaching and learning
- good language teaching resources
- good range of language programmes to meet community needs
- well-led and well-managed area of learning

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement
- insufficient use of target language by tutors in many lessons
- no system for recording learning outcomes on non-accredited courses

Achievement and standards

133. In most lessons, there is very good development of language skills. Learners have good mastery of basic vocabulary, grammar and phrases on beginners' courses and are increasingly confident in speaking the language. There are similarly good levels of achievement in improvers classes. In BSL, learners communicate well and use newly acquired signs with clarity and confidence. Braille learners who have deteriorating vision are developing tactile skills well, with real benefit to their lives. They are able to access Braille library books and one student is writing a novel. Overall, enrolments in this curriculum area have increased by 50 per cent since 2000, rising from 500 to 960 enrolments in the first two terms of 2003-04. Data for the years 2001-02 and 2002-03 show poor retention and achievement. According to the self-assessment report, retention fell from 60 per cent to 56 per cent in this period and the proportion of learners achieving a qualification on accredited courses fell from 48 per cent in 2001-02 to only 32 per cent in 2002-03. During this period, learners were required to pay the entry fee for the accreditation. Many learners, while wanting the discipline of a structured course, attach less importance to gaining a qualification. The revised strategy of seven-week courses improved retention and achievement in the autumn of 2003 to over 75 per cent, although the number of learners progressing to the third module remains low.

Quality of education and training

134. Teaching and learning are good, and give particular consideration to individual needs. The staff to learner ratio is good. There are many examples of learners taking responsibility for their own learning, asking questions persistently until they are satisfied that they understand the phrase in question. Seventy-six per cent of the sessions were good or better and 35 per cent were very good or excellent. There is some particularly good teaching on BSL and Braille courses, with clear demonstrations of new signs relating to shopping, in a relaxed atmosphere in a BSL class. In Braille, the tutor gives very good support to each individual, helping one student to master the encoding of number symbols on a Braille machine. She was helped by sighted volunteer workers who have been taught Braille in order to give support effectively. In foreign language classes, there were many instances of teaching tailored to individuals' needs and good retention of inexperienced language learners. Learners particularly appreciate the insights to foreign culture which many tutors provide. A Gujarati lesson made very good use of vegetables from the Indian subcontinent to demonstrate the concept of singular and plural. In an Urdu lesson, the tutor discussed the content of the lesson with the learners, and included examples of Urdu script for the benefit of a primary school teacher who needs that skill to communicate with Asian parents. In the Asian languages and Greek, good use of the board to write words in the relevant script enabled learners to master reading and writing, even on beginners' courses.

135. Language teaching resources are good. Coventry AES has developed an effective policy for ensuring a minimum level of audiovisual resources in every language classroom. This policy has been well implemented and every classroom visited now has a tape recorder, video machine and overhead projector. This is a good achievement in a service which uses many different venues. The Braille classroom has a Braille machine, and an embosser linked to a computer is on order. There is some availability of laptops and data projectors in a number of centres. Good use of presentation software was observed in a Spanish lesson. There is an ongoing programme to show tutors how this equipment and the electronic whiteboard can be used to enhance language learning. The languages manager has developed a good website with ICT resources for language tutors.

136. Coventry AES has a very good range of language programmes which have been developed to meet community needs. Currently there are 11 languages being taught, including Greek, Japanese, BSL, Braille and a substantial Spanish provision, all spread across the city. A good programme of three Asian languages for non-speakers and second-generation residents has recently been introduced in response to local demand. There are 'circle' classes in French, Italian and Spanish for those wishing to develop their fluency at a more advanced level in a non-accredited environment.

137. Accommodation in a wide range of venues is satisfactory, with some good displays of foreign cultural interest. However, there was one instance where a group of learners was being taught on a stage area while an art class took place in the main hall. Their conversations reverberated and interfered with the tape playing an end-of-course

assessment activity in French. There is a good proportion of native speaker tutors who have an appropriate teaching qualification.

138. Tutors give good support to individual learners. New course information sheets have been developed in a standardised format which has resulted in many more learners seeking guidance by telephone, and fewer learners withdrawing because they enrol on inappropriate courses.

139. There is insufficient use of the target language by tutors in many lessons. This affected 35 per cent of the lessons observed. One experienced linguist found that she was using more English because of the style of the book used in beginners' classes. In many classes taught by native speakers, there is a reluctance to use the language being learned for social conversation and class management. This also occurs in improvers' classes where learners clearly have the ability to follow quite complex language, but were not given many opportunities to develop this skill. This issue was identified in the self-assessment report and has been discussed on training days, but still remains a feature in a significant number of classes.

140. There is no system for recording learners' attainment on non-accredited courses. While some tutors have very good practice in recording learners' outcomes, many limit their assessment to ongoing observation of learners' achievements in class without any formal recording. One tutor is particularly effective in ensuring that learners assess and record their own achievements. A recently introduced checklist is beginning to improve this situation.

Leadership and management

141. This area of learning is well led and well managed. There has been a good response to the problem of poor retention which was identified in the self-assessment report. Coventry AES listened to learners' views and contacted many who withdrew. This identified the fact that many language learners do not want a full 30-week course. The introduction of seven-week courses for beginners is more closely tailored to learners' needs.

142. There is a very good, well-attended staff development programme. Most tutors have attended several Saturday morning training sessions, although some of the benefit has been off-set by a high turnover in staff. Recent recruitment criteria has looked for longer commitment and this situation is improving. There is a well-developed languages strategy which links to, and builds upon, the national languages strategy. Good use is made of the lesson observations to improve individual performance and identify training needs for the whole service.

143. There are particularly good strategies for widening participation and there has been an increase in enrolments. This includes a strategy to increase the number of day time classes. Car workers have been encouraged to attend classes after finishing work early on a Friday afternoon, as a result of a recruitment initiative. BSL courses have developed in response to demand and a Braille course has been developed for learners who have

COVENTRY LEA

deteriorating vision. There is a good system for evaluating the new seven-week beginners courses and an adequate process for course reviews of 30-week courses. This is supplemented by a good process of consultation with individual tutors and analysis of learners' feedback.

Foundation programmes**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	2718	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good retention and achievement
- good teaching and learning
- good support for learners
- well-designed courses for adults with learning disabilities
- good range of programmes in ESOL
- effective strategies to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of ICT in literacy and numeracy
- ineffective review practices in literacy and numeracy
- inadequate arrangements to share good practice

Achievement and standards

144. There are good achievement and standards on foundation programmes. On ESOL programmes there is good development of learners' language skills and confidence, which impacts on their lives. Learners on many courses speak of their increased confidence in dealing with everyday situations. For example, learners have joined libraries with their children and have made appointments over the telephone. Some learners recovering from mental disabilities are attending regularly and making progress in their communication skills. Retention has improved in the past two years in a profile that includes a high proportion of refugees and asylum seekers and adults from disadvantaged communities. Coventry AES implements a number of successful strategies to follow up learners' absence and to retain learners. There are good progression opportunities within programmes, especially on the main site, but also in many community venues. Learners also progress beyond ESOL programmes. For example, Coventry AES supports the language needs of learners to enable them to participate in childcare training and to enter employment.

145. Learners on the adults with learning difficulties programmes have a range of complex needs and they gain new skills in a wide range of subjects. They increase their confidence and many are able to talk knowledgeably about the practical skills they have gained. For example, learners on ICT courses talk about their computer skills and use appropriate terminology. In a health-related class learners make links with their personal experience of the doctor and dentist. In a woodcraft class, the dolls houses and other

COVENTRY LEA

woodcraft artefacts produced by learners are very good and they have been sold in craft markets in the locality. Many have developed the necessary skills to travel independently to centres and are able to talk confidently about their progress. Tutors show good understanding of their learning needs and set challenging goals that learners achieve.

146. There is good achievement on literacy and numeracy courses. In 2001-02, retention on courses across Coventry AES was 65 per cent. This improved significantly in 2002-03 to 76 per cent. Many learners who leave the programme early do so for valid personal reasons and then return during the following year. However, Coventry AES does not have a system for collecting these data. Achievement rates in 2001-02 were 68 per cent and this has improved in 2002-03 to 72 per cent. There are poor retention and achievement rates in GCSE mathematics and English. Retention rates for GCSE English in 2001-02 was 45 per cent and in 2002-03 it had fallen to 43 per cent. Achievement is poor with a pass rate of 45 per cent in 2001-02 and 43 per cent in 2002-03. In GCSE mathematics, achievement is also poor with a pass rate of 27 per cent in 2001-02 and 28 per cent in 2002-03. Coventry AES has now taken action and has reduced the number of learners they accept on these programmes. They are encouraging learners to work towards more appropriate level 2 qualifications such as the new national tests in literacy and numeracy. Additionally, they have introduced new preparatory GCSE courses in mathematics and English.

Quality of education and training

147. The teaching and learning on foundation programmes are good. In ESOL classes most tutors plan effectively to meet group and individual needs and prepare their sessions well. They use a range of teaching methods to develop learners' language skills and confidence. Many tutors prepare a range of activities and materials to extend opportunities for language practise. Individual learning plans are developed for all learners and identify learners' needs and interests. However, some plans have insufficient detail to effectively assess the learners' progress. Tutors have good working relationships with learners and this supports their learning, but in some sessions the needs of individual learners are not met. Some tutors are not using initial and formative assessment and there is insufficient differentiation to enable all learners to progress. In classes for adults with learning difficulties, tutors ensure that all learners are involved and use clear language at a level that meets learners' needs. They provide a range of challenging learning activities that take account of complex needs. In most literacy and numeracy classes, tutors use methods that enable learners to learn effectively with regard to individual circumstances. Sessions are well planned with clear objectives that all learners understand, and good use is made of learners' cultural backgrounds and experiences to plan learning. However, in less effective sessions the focus of planning is on worksheets to be completed, rather than on learning outcomes.

148. There are well-designed courses for adults with learning difficulties. They enable learners' to progress and widen their experience and try new skills. For example, enterprise activities enable learners to make products that they sell at an open market and in community centres. In one group, demand for their quality greeting cards

exceeds supply and each member of the group has a role in the production process. The learners run the café at one centre as a business and it provides a resource for all users of the centre. The 'new ways' scheme enables learners to be included in mainstream classes. They are able to achieve OCN accreditation by demonstrating that they can make choices about learning opportunities. These courses enable learners to move on to different types of provision and engage in the wider community.

149. There is good support for learners on foundation programmes. In programmes for adults with learning difficulties, learning support assistants, volunteers and carers are well managed and provide support at a level that matches learners' needs. Peer support is encouraged in all classes and learners with complex needs have individual support. In ESOL and literacy and numeracy provision, crèche support is good and many learners said they would not have been able to access programmes without this support. Tutors provide good personal support for learners. For example, a learner in a literacy class was unable to get to the centre because her battery-operated wheelchair was broken. The tutor arranged for work to be sent home and collected, and the learner was able to return to the class without having lost learning time.

150. There is a particularly good range of programmes in ESOL. Coventry AES has responded well to the needs of local communities and to the local LSC's research into the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. There is a range of courses at different levels taught in the community and on the main site. Programmes on the main site are intensive and run for seven and a half to 12.5 hours a week. Courses are particularly effective in meeting the needs of women, those seeking employment and adults who are recovering from mental illness.

151. In literacy and numeracy programmes there is insufficient use of ICT. In most centres there is access to ICT, although some of the equipment is in need of refurbishment. Coventry AES has bought laptops to deal with this, but these are not always appropriate for learners with few or no computer skills. In the most effective lessons observed tutors use ICT to support and motivate learning, but in many of the centres that had good ICT facilities, they were not being used by many tutors to enhance learning. There are some ineffective review practices in literacy and numeracy. Reviews of learners' progress are generally carried out once each term. However, this is not sufficiently frequent to enable learners to have a clear understanding of the progress they are making. Some learners have not had a review since they started in September 2003. Recording of reviews is not thorough enough and often reflects the learners' enjoyment rather than what they have learned.

Leadership and management

152. Within foundation programmes there are effective strategies to widen participation. There is a good range of programmes to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners. Provision is located at appropriate centres within targeted communities and some effective partnerships have been established to extend the range of courses available to specific groups. In courses for adults with learning disabilities there are learners from across the community, and support is provided by volunteers and staff

COVENTRY LEA

from minority ethnic groups. In ESOL, literacy and numeracy programmes a suitable range of courses is available during the day, twilight, evening and Saturday mornings.

153. Arrangements to share good practice are inadequate. The formal arrangements for sharing good practice are through the meetings structure. This is insufficient, however. Although there were good examples of learning materials being used effectively, there were similar classes where some tutors were using unsuitable resources. The new system of paperwork introduced in September has impacted on initial assessment and monitoring of learners' progress, although it is not yet used effectively by all tutors. Some tutors use inadequate lesson planning documents and there are variations in the use of individual learning plans. There are differences in the frequency and quality of reviews and target-setting among similar areas of provision. Tutors discuss teaching and resources informally and say they would welcome the opportunity to share resources more systematically.

154. Resources are satisfactory, although some accommodation is poor. One class is held in a large hall where the acoustics are poor and there is background noise. Another is held in a room where there is no natural light and no emergency lighting in the event of power failure.

155. Quality assurance for foundation programmes is satisfactory. All tutors are observed teaching and have a staff development review annually. Information from the reviews is used for the staff development programme. There are good staff development opportunities and staff can attend a wide range of relevant training. In 2002-03 this included training on the new core curriculum, new teaching materials, diagnostic assessment and modern numeracy. Inspectors' findings matched those in the self-assessment report and they agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses.

156. Coventry AES offers a diverse range of programmes to reflect the community it serves. In ESOL classes, materials promote cultural diversity. In programmes for adults with learning difficulties, Asian men and women who have complex needs are included in a range of courses. Support is provided by staff and volunteers from minority ethnic groups.

Family learning**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	850	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good development of skills for helping children
- good progression on to other courses
- good teaching and learning
- well-qualified and experienced staff

Weaknesses

- low recruitment on to some courses

Achievement and standards

157. The development of learners' skills for helping children is good. Learners increase their understanding of their children's school work. They learn about the national curriculum in English and mathematics and develop a range of skills and strategies to enable them to support their children's learning at home. They produce good materials to reinforce the children's understanding. In the process, many learners develop their own skills in English and mathematics.

158. Good progress is made towards achieving the general learning goals which are identified at the start of the course. End-of-session evaluations demonstrate learners' progress. Fifty-two per cent of learners at entry level have qualifications below level 1 in English and 62 per cent are below level 1 in mathematics. Most of the learners take assessments leading to qualifications. From the data available, achievement rates are at least satisfactory. Many learners report that their self-confidence has increased as a result of their achievements on the course.

159. Progression from, and on to, other family learning courses is good. Many learners have attended other courses previously, and most of those interviewed reported that they intended to take a further course. Two tutors had started as learners on the programmes some years ago.

160. Retention is satisfactory and improving in some areas. In the families into learning and family language, literacy and numeracy programmes, retention is around 86 per cent. In the 'footsteps' programme, retention is low, but has improved from 58 per cent in 2000-01 to 72 per cent in 2002-03. Coventry AES has modified the 'footsteps' programme to better meet the needs of learners by offering a more flexible curriculum in an attempt to improve the retentions rates.

Quality of education and training

161. Eighty per cent of teaching and learning sessions were good or better. Activities are well planned and well delivered and meet learners' needs. There is a wide range of often stimulating activities related to the stage of the learners' children and which explore the teaching methods and curriculum of the school. Classes are often very interactive and participative. Learners speak highly of the clear explanations given by tutors and of their supportive approach. In some courses there are visits to places of interest and the parents are shown how to maximise the learning opportunities arising from these. In several courses there is the opportunity for parents to borrow children's books on a weekly basis to share at home. Learners are very motivated and speak enthusiastically about their courses and the opportunities they give to gain new skills and to help their children more effectively.

162. There is a high level of staffing to support learning. In classes where reception children are attending alongside their parents, there is usually a support worker present. In some classes, an ESOL teacher works alongside the tutor to support those learners who need language support. In one class the ESOL teacher holds a session immediately after the family learning class to help learners who have difficulties. She also prepares learners for the following lesson by introducing them to vocabulary that will be used. In other classes, a literacy and numeracy teacher visits the class to encourage learners, who would benefit from it, to attend literacy or numeracy classes.

163. Staff are particularly well qualified and experienced. All tutors have a teaching qualification and at least half have additional qualifications in family language and literacy, early years education, the education of adults or childcare. Most also have considerable experience of teaching in primary schools. This ensures a good understanding of school curriculum and current teaching methods.

164. Initial assessment is informal to take account of the fact that learners are not usually seeking a learning opportunity for themselves, but are there to help their children. Systems for recording detailed individual learning plans are not fully developed, as identified in the self-assessment report. The progress of individuals is not usually recorded in any detail. Learners identify what they hope to gain from the course and evaluate each activity and state what they have learned from it. Tutors are able to measure individual progress informally in this way. Learners are kept well informed about opportunities for progression.

165. Resources are satisfactory. There are adequate resources available for making materials to support children's learning. Palm top computers have been purchased to lend to parents to support learning at home and these are popular with children and encourage their writing and drawing, as well as developing parents' computer skills. Many courses have a crèche supplied by Coventry AES and this allows parents to attend classes. Accommodation is sometimes cramped due to a shortage of suitable accommodation in schools. Parents often have to use chairs and tables designed for infants. However, a parents' and children's after-school computing class has the use of a

new, well-equipped computer suite.

Leadership and management

166. Tutors have monthly meetings with line managers and find this provides useful information and support. They are given many opportunities for development from training provided by the children and families service, the adult service or the LEA. However, there is no systematic way of ensuring the dissemination of good practice among tutors.

167. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. Feedback is regularly sought from learners in classes and improvements to the programmes are made as a result. End-of-session and course evaluations by tutors are self-critical and useful for informing future sessions. Tutors are observed teaching on a yearly basis, although reports do not often provide clear recommendations for improvement.

168. Provision is targeted at a wide range of culturally diverse groups and disadvantaged learners. This is a key feature of Coventry AES's mission. Most staff are aware of the particular needs of these groups. Minority ethnic groups are represented on the programmes in greater numbers than in the city as a whole, although there has been a fall in retention in these groups recently, as identified in the self-assessment report. Men are predictably under-represented as learners on these programmes, but efforts are being made to attract them with special 'fun for fathers' events.

169. There is low recruitment to some courses, although overall recruitment targets are met. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. Efforts at marketing have not recruited many learners in some schools. The effectiveness of partnerships with schools varies. In the best partnerships, schools make a valuable contribution to supporting family learning opportunities by targeting parents and providing good accommodation. In some already small classes, learners had been recruited but did not attend regularly or had stopped attending. Parents were unable to benefit from the stimulation and company of others. This had a negative impact on their learning.