INSPECTION REPORT

Middlesbrough Adult Education Service

23 January 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

Middlesbrough Adult Education Service

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Middlesbrough Adult Education Service (MAES) is part of Middlesbrough LEA (the LEA). Middlesbrough is a densely populated city in the Northeast of England. Most learners come from the Middlesbrough area. MAES provides part-time learning programmes in land-based; construction; business administration, management and professional; information and communications technology (ICT); retailing, customer service and transportation; hospitality sports, leisure and travel; hairdressing and beauty therapy; health, social care and public services; visual and performing arts and media; English, languages and communication, foundation programmes and family learning. The foundation programme includes literacy and numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities. During the inspection, provision in ICT, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel; visual and performing arts and media; English, languages and communication; foundation provision in literacy and numeracy and ESOL; and family learning were inspected. There were few classes in the other areas of provision and these were not included. MAES works with a large number of partners from statutory and voluntary sectors. There is no subcontracted provision.

2. MAES operates within the lifelong learning division of Middlesbrough Council's education department. A community education manager, responsible to the head of the council's lifelong learning division, has responsibility for strategic-planning for adult and community learning and for developing policies and action plans. She is also responsible for managing the adult education budgets and is supported by a finance manager and finance administration assistants. A development manager is responsible for operational management of quality assurance and self-assessment systems. He also manages eight area of learning co-ordinators who support the six full-time and 130 part-time tutors in the 12 areas of learning. Staff are located at the two main venues. Additionally, through a partnership with Connexions, the service employs a manager, an information and advice worker and a full-time clerical assistant at a venue in Middlesbrough town centre. Classes are offered from 98 community venues throughout the borough including schools, community centres, sports centres, hospitals, social services premises, the mosque and the international centre. Around 200 courses are offered. The service has steadily grown over the past few years and last year there was a 26 per cent increase in enrolments for all courses. Additional tutors and administrative staff have been recruited to support the increasing provision. MAES was accredited with the Investors in People standard in December 2003. This is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

3. The LEA's learning provision is funded by Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In November 2003, the unemployment rate for Middlesbrough was 4.9 per cent, compared with 2.4 per cent nationally. The main areas of employment are the service industries, public administration, education, health and distribution, hotels and restaurants. The 2001 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic

groups in Middlesbrough is 6.3 per cent, compared 9 per cent nationally. In 2003, the proportion of school leavers in Middlesbrough achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 38.8 per cent, compared with 52.9 per cent nationally. Middlesbrough is defined as an area of severe deprivation.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

4. There are 894 learners on ICT programmes. Five hundred and thirty-six learners are following accredited programmes and 358 are on non-accredited programmes. Just over 40 per cent are men, 11 per cent are from minority ethnic groups and just above 1 per cent have a disclosed disability. Most learners are between 25 and 64 years of age, and a third are over 65. There are several ways that learners can enrol including: visiting one of the centres, applying on the website, by postal application, or by referral from an external agency. The range of courses comprise an introduction to computers; desktop publishing; introduction to the internet; digital imaging; electronic presentation skills; and a range of information technology (IT) courses. The provision covers levels 1 to 3. There are 70 classes delivered across eight community centres, one school and one hospital situated in and around the Middlesbrough area. The duration of courses is between five and 19 weeks with most delivered over a 10-week period on a part-time basis. Classes are available during the day and evening at the various venues. There is a curriculum co-ordinator who is responsible for three full-time tutor co-ordinators and 23 part-time tutors.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

5. MAES offers a small number of sport, exercise, food hygiene and cake decorating classes as part of the adult education programme. In sport and exercise-related classes there are 191 learners. There are 23 learners on the two cake decorating classes. There were no food hygiene classes running during the inspection. Just over 17 per cent of learners are men and 1.6 per cent have a disclosed disability. Very few learners are from minority ethnic groups. Almost three-quarters are over 45 years old. Sport and exercise classes include badminton, archery, keep fit and yoga classes. These take place during the day and in the evenings. Only the cake decorating has the potential for accreditation through the open college network. A range of levels are available and this allows for progression. The programme is delivered in three 10-week terms in a range of venues, many of which are in wards of high social and economic deprivation. The area of provision is managed by a part-time co-ordinator who is relatively new in post. Management has been carried out before this appointment by the development manager with assistance from the ICT co-ordinator. All tutors are part-time and teach classes only once or twice each week.

Visual & performing arts & media

6. There are 351 learners enrolled on 39 courses in visual and performing arts. In 2002-03 a total of 1,088 learners joined visual and performing arts courses. Twenty per cent are men and six learners are from minority ethnic groups. Forty-two per cent are aged between 19 and 59, 57 per cent are over 60, and 11.5 per cent have a disclosed disability. Courses include a range of arts and crafts such as drawing, watercolours, dress making, card making, lacemaking, pottery, stained glass, upholstery and French polishing. Performing arts include ballroom and Scottish dancing, music, guitar and singing. Courses are available across 14 centres throughout the area. Daytime and evening classes are available, but there are no weekend classes. Seventy per cent of the courses are accredited by the open college network. Classes are of two-hours' duration and run between five and 10 weeks. They are available from beginners to more advanced level. There is a part-time co-ordinator and 17 part-time tutors who teach between two and 12 hours each week.

English, languages & communications

7. Four hundred and one learners follow 27 courses in this area of learning. One hundred and twenty-four of these learners are on British or Asian Sign Language programmes. Other courses are offered in foreign languages, including Arabic, French, German, Greek, Italian, Spanish and Urdu. There are also courses in creative writing, although these were not inspected. Just under 40 per cent of learners are men, 5 per cent are from minority ethnic groups and 4 per cent have a disclosed disability. Learners are from a range of all age groups, with almost one-third between 55 and 64 years old. Learners of modern foreign languages and creative writing follow open college network-accredited courses. Learners of sign language follow open college or other recognised national sign language qualifications. Most courses last for 20 or 30 weeks, although some are short taster courses. Most lessons are two-hour sessions once each week, from Mondays to Fridays. Lessons take place at various times of day, with just over half in the evenings. Courses are held at eight centres across the borough and are taught by 15 part-time tutors. There is a part-time co-ordinator.

Foundation programmes

8. Foundation provision includes literacy and numeracy, ESOL and provision for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. Provision for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities was not inspected. There are 249 learners on 57 literacy and numeracy courses and 233 learners who have made 421 enrolments for 65 ESOL classes. There are additional ESOL enrolments still to be entered. Fifty per cent of learner enrolments are men, 32 per cent are from minority ethnic groups, and 7 per cent have a disclosed disability. Almost 60 per cent are between 19 and 34 years of age, and 20 per cent are over 65.

9. There are discrete courses in literacy and numeracy from pre-entry to level 2, dyslexia assessment and individual support. Learning is accredited by the open college network and there are other nationally recognised qualifications. Some courses are tasters or skills builders and are do not lead to external accreditation. Courses are available at 14 centres in schools, community centres and other venues across Middlesbrough. Flexible learning centres offer drop-in support facilities for independent learners. Two full-time staff and 25 part-time staff are involved in literacy and numeracy teaching.

10. ESOL provision is available from pre-entry level to level 1 and is linked to the adult ESOL core curriculum. Most courses take place during the day, but classes have been arranged in the evenings specifically to accommodate shift workers at the request of their trades union. Classes are held at a variety of locations in and around Middlesbrough town centre, providing opportunities for learners from different cultural backgrounds and those who face various barriers to learning. ESOL courses target adult learners from the minority ethnic population. Some of these live permanently in the area and others, including asylum seekers and refugees, are temporary residents. Approximately 30 per cent of learners are preparing for externally accredited assessment. The ESOL staff team consists of one full-time co-ordinator and 17 part-time tutors and most have a specific ESOL qualification.

Family learning

11. Ninety-eight learners are on 16 courses in family learning. Ninety per cent are women and 11 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. The largest age group is between 25 and 34. Fewer than 3 per cent of learners have a declared disability. All courses are designed to develop understanding of learning and development for children and parents. Some involve parents and children learning together, and others are for parents and people who work with children in a paid or unpaid capacity. Courses include: computer-based courses; helping in school; health-related courses; substance misuse and drug awareness; behaviour management; child development; literacy and numeracy related courses; and courses for people who work in schools as teaching assistants or midday supervisors. Most courses are accredited at level 1 and 2, through a large open college network regional programme. Accreditation is optional. Courses are offered during the school day and are between three and 24 weeks long. Most are for 10 weeks and are offered for two hours each week. All courses are free and childcare is provided when required. A number of courses are offered in partnership with schools and voluntary organisations that work with disadvantaged families. Courses are offered at a wide range of community venues, such as schools and community centres, close to where learners live. Learners find out about courses through a range of ways. Schools and partners communicate regularly with parents to find out what they are interested in or to tell them about courses, and the family learning team provide informal information sessions. Some learners find out by word of mouth. A full-time co-ordinator and core staff of three half-time tutors manage the programme. There are 14 other part-time tutors who work between two and 10 hours each week.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	10
Number of inspection days	49
Number of learner interviews	306
Number of staff interviews	63
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	30
Number of partner/external agency interviews	25
Number of visits	74

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

12. The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, MAES's leadership and management are good, as is its approach to equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The quality of learning in foundation including literacy, numeracy and language, is outstanding. In ICT, modern foreign languages and family learning, the quality of learning is good. In hospitality, sport and leisure, and visual and performing arts and media it 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

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

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

Visual & performing arts & media	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

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

Foundation programmes	1
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	1

Family learning	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

KEY FINDINGS
Achievement and standards

13. **Achievement rates are good in most areas of provision.** In ICT, cake decoration, modern foreign languages, ESOL and family learning, achievement rates in the region of 70 per cent and above are common. Attainment and standards are good in many areas. In visual and performing arts and media, learners attain good technical skills. Modern

foreign language learners develop a wide range of language skills. British Sign Language (BSL) learners are able to sign effectively. Attainment of literacy, numeracy and language skills is good in foundation. Learners make good progress in foundation and family learning. They develop confidence and increase their self-esteem. Literacy and numeracy and ESOL learners are able to live more independent lives. Just over half of family learning learners progress into further learning or employment. Learners on sports courses gain a wide range of health and social benefits from their classes.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Information & communications technology	0	3	14	5	0	0	0	22
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	0	2	3	1	0	0	6
Visual & performing arts & media	0	0	7	5	0	0	0	12
English, languages & communications	1	0	4	3	0	0	0	8
Foundation programmes	1	6	16	7	0	0	0	30
Family learning	0	2	2	4	0	0	0	8
Total	**2**	**11**	**45**	**27**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**86**

14. **Teaching is good or better in almost every area of learning.** In hospitality, sport, leisure and travel it is broadly satisfactory or better. The best lessons are well planned with detailed lesson plans and schemes of work. A wide range of learning activities are used. In ICT, good use is made of visual presentation equipment. Many tutors in visual and performing arts are practising artists. Effective demonstrations enable learners to develop a good understanding of practical and creative skills. Modern foreign language tutors effectively use lively discussions and debate in which learners display high degrees of fluency. However, there is too much use of English in some modern foreign language lessons. Literacy and numeracy tutors effectively integrate ICT into lessons to develop literacy skills. In ESOL and family learning, games are used to develop skills and knowledge that learners can use with children.

15. **Resources are particularly good in ICT and good in foundation.** Tutors have good access to CD-ROM learning resources, and many tutors produce their own resources. Most ICT centres are well equipped and provide a good learning environment. Many tutors have teaching qualifications. However, accommodation and access to resources is poor in some areas where the rooms are too small for the number of people using them and for the type of activity taking place. There is a heavy reliance on tutors carrying equipment and resources with them. In family learning, some rooms are cramped and poorly equipped.

16. **Initial assessment is particularly effective for literacy and numeracy.** Learners have an initial interview to discover their needs and interests, followed by a well-managed diagnostic assessment. Initial assessment in ESOL is adequate, but is under review to

improve the procedure. Assessment of externally accredited learning is satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements. There is insufficient initial assessment in ICT, and individual learning plans are incomplete. In visual and performing arts and family learning, individual learning plans tend to describe activities rather than learning goals.

17. **The range of provision is responsive to community needs in foundation and family learning.** A wide range of courses at different levels is available at locations which are accessible to learners. ESOL classes for women are held in the mosque and a range of literacy and numeracy classes are held in workplaces. The curriculum framework for family learning is particularly flexible. Groups are fully involved in negotiating their learning plan. In other areas of learning, the range of programmes is satisfactory. In visual and performing arts, a wide, but traditional programme is available. Many modern foreign language learners travel some distance to attend classes in order to communicate with friends, family or work colleagues in the language of their choice.

18. **Learner support is particularly good in foundation.** Learners who request information are invited to talk to ensure that their class is appropriate. Pre-course information is simple and easy to understand. It is available on a customised website that is frequently the first point of contact for learners. ESOL and family learning make effective use of partners in the provision of information. Support networks for refugees and asylum seekers are referral points into ESOL provision. Schools communicate regularly with parents to tell them about courses. The family learning team follow up contact through informal information sessions. However, in visual and performing arts, there is insufficient information about material costs. Additional learning support for learners who are not in foundation is identified at enrolment and is satisfactory overall. Two learners in visual and performing arts have their own individual lesson plans. Sensitive support to a learner in a family learning class has enabled her to keep up with others in the group.

Leadership and management

19. **There is clear strategic direction at MAES.** The council's clear vision to raise aims, improve educational attainment and enhance employability is supported by strong leadership. Senior managers have a clear understanding of how the adult education service is performing. There is good partnership working to develop provision. A strategic overview of services avoids duplication of MAES's provision with other local providers, such as colleges and leisure services. Staff liaise closely with other agencies to meet the needs of carers and other service users such as refugees or adults with learning difficulties. Full- and part-time staff and volunteers benefit from good staff development. The staff development programme is well planned and targeted to achieve the service's aims and objectives, the development plan and the priorities of government agencies. Staff have systematic appraisals and observations. All new staff have an induction to the service. MAES is strongly committed to widening participation. It actively seeks to remove barriers to learning and has developed a wide range of effective strategies to engage new learners. These include effective targeting of provision in wards with the highest levels of deprivation, and well-developed partnerships. There are effective support mechanisms for learners. Their support needs are identified at enrolment, and a

fee remission policy allows over 60 per cent of learners to receive full fee remission. Support is also available for course materials and transport, but this is not prominent in the course prospectus. There is good use of quality assurance to promote continuous improvements. There are many examples of improvements to the service which have had a positive impact on learners, such as an increase in retention, achievements and progression rates. The management information system is inefficient. It is unable to quickly produce accurate data. Staff waste many hours trying to produce data reports and often have to resort to producing data manually. Some managers have developed their own data system.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- good partnership working to develop provision
- good staff development
- good strategies to engage new learners
- effective support mechanisms for learners
- good use of quality assurance

Weaknesses

- inefficient management information system support

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- good achievement and retention rates
- good progression
- good teaching
- particularly good learning resources

Weaknesses

- incomplete individual learning plans
- insufficient initial assessment

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Strengths
- good achievements in cake decorating
- wide range of benefits for learners in sport

Weaknesses
- insufficient emphasis on progression opportunities in sport
- no standard health screening process used in sport

Visual & performing arts & media

Strengths
- good standard of technical skills
- good teaching in most classes
- good range of learning activities in most classes

Weaknesses
- some poor accommodation and practical resources
- weak use of individual learning plans
- insufficient information on material costs

English, languages & communications

Strengths
- good attainment and achievement rates
- good teaching in most sessions
- particularly well-managed BSL provision

Weaknesses
- poor access to resources at some venues

Foundation programmes

Strengths
- good achievement in accredited qualifications in ESOL
- very good attainment of literacy, numeracy and language skills
- some very good teaching and learning
- particularly effective initial assessment for literacy and numeracy
- responsive provision to meet cultural and community learning needs
- particularly effective support for learners
- good resources
- very good management
- good partnerships

Weaknesses
- some poor learning environments

Family learning

Strengths
- good achievement rates
- very good progression
- some very good teaching
- flexible and responsive provision
- good programme management

Weaknesses
- some unsuitable accommodation
- weak use of individual learning plans

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT MIDDLESBROUGH ADULT EDUCATION SERVICE:

- very supportive and helpful staff who are approachable, patient and explain things well
- ease of access - close to where we live and courses at convenient times
- 'learning new things at my own pace'
- meeting new friends, good social contact
- 'I have much more confidence and self-esteem'
- being able to give something back to the community
- the flexibility of classes - different levels and subjects
- 'classes have helped me to be able to help my children'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK MIDDLESBROUGH ADULT EDUCATION SERVICE COULD IMPROVE:

- facilities for learning in community-based classes - more space and books
- more information about the course content and course requirements

KEY CHALLENGES FOR MIDDLESBROUGH ADULT EDUCATION SERVICE:

- maintain good access to learning in the community while raising the quality of accommodation
- develop and implement an efficient and simple overall management information system
- fully implement individual learning plans across provision
- continue to improve the quality of teaching

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

- clear strategic direction
- good partnership working to develop provision
- good staff development
- good strategies to engage new learners
- effective support mechanisms for learners
- good use of quality assurance

Weaknesses

- inefficient management information system support

20. Adult education in Middlesbrough has a clear strategic direction. The council and MAES have a clear vision for Middlesbrough to raise aims, improve educational attainment and enhance employability. Strong leadership closely links the strategic direction of MAES to that vision. One councillor has responsibility for promoting education and is set performance indicators to ensure that this is achieved. He works closely with the LEA's chief executive and head of lifelong learning and community education manager to discuss progress with adult education. MAES's strategy is closely linked to other national and local strategies, such as, the basic skills strategy and the Tees Valley and local LSC's strategic plans for the area. MAES has successfully developed and implemented strategies to increase enrolments, retention and achievement rates, accredited provision and to offer progression routes. Senior managers have a good understanding of how the adult education service is performing. Tutors and partners understand and sign up to MAES's strategic direction and vision. Clear, key objectives to implement the vision are widely shared.

21. There is good partnership working to develop provision that meets the needs of individuals and local communities. MAES avoids duplicating provision offered by other key local providers such as colleges and leisure services and focuses its provision at level 1. Managers in the lifelong learning team meet every fortnight and work closely together to find ways of ensuring that adult education, Sure Start and the youth teams offer maximum learning opportunities in the community. Internal communication among staff and external communication with partners is frequent, clear and recorded.

22. Staff liaise with other agencies in a wide range of partnership working. For example, through working with social services and a national society concerned with Alzheimer's disease, an accredited programme has been developed to meet the needs of carers. Another programme has been developed with Jobcentre Plus, Connexions and a school

of motoring to help improve learners' employability through offering them driving theory, practical driving, computer studies, jobsearch and initial assessment and support for literacy and numeracy. MAES is closely involved in community development through providing community councillors' training. MAES also helps partners access funding for resources, such as, providing computers for community centres. Much work is done with community groups and on an individual basis to identify need. Staff are encouraged to suggest ideas for new programmes and are given time to work with partners and to develop courses. Partnerships are used well to recruit volunteers who frequently progress to paid employment as their skills and confidence increase. MAES works with the youth service to support young people who are likely to be excluded from school, or those with few or no qualifications, to provide them with accredited programmes.

23. Full- and part-time staff and volunteers all benefit from good staff development. The staff development programme is planned and targeted to achieve the service's aims and objectives, the development plan and the priorities of government agencies. For example, the staff for literacy and numeracy provision have a very clear understanding of how to implement the national basic skills strategy. Staff receive a wide range of training, which in the past nine months has included teaching and learning styles, quality assurance procedures, assessment, learner support, Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requirements and learning environments, as well as training on their own specialism. Staff development needs are identified through staff appraisals, observations, team meetings and individual meetings with tutors and area co-ordinators. They link with the staff development plans for the area of learning and the overall service. New staff receive an induction to the service and this was identified in the self-assessment report.

24. MAES's strategy to provide literacy, numeracy and ICT support is satisfactory. A system is in place to highlight support needs. However, there is some variability in how well individual tutors highlight support needs. Support is offered sensitively when a need is identified.

25. There is close financial monitoring of budget expenditure. Performance management is satisfactory. Performance targets are set and monitored at frequent meetings between staff and their line managers at all levels of the organisation. Action is being taken to deal with vague targets.

26. MAES's management information system is inefficient. It is unable to quickly produce accurate data to show how many learners are currently on programmes. Some centres are not networked and it takes a long time for attendance data to be input on a central database. Staff waste time trying to produce data reports and often have to resort to producing data manually. Some managers have developed their own data systems. There is no overall chart to show what training staff have attended and when. It is time consuming for MAES to produce data showing learners' progression between courses and to identify new learners. When it does produce data, some of it is inaccurate. Many staff are unaware of the management information system's capability. There are insufficient staff to input data into the system. These issues have been identified by MAES in their self-assessment report.

27. MAES uses a large number of community venues as part of its strategy to reach learners; however, some are unsatisfactory learning environments. MAES does have an accommodation strategy and is reviewing the suitability of accommodation in line with the Disability Discrimination Act's requirements. Plans are being developed to build an annex at one major site, and to stop using another; however, the strategy does not relate to all buildings. There are some good examples of MAES providing equipment, such as security lights to improve venues but some learning environments are unsuitable. Although the procedure for buying resources is made clear to all tutors, some do not use the system and provide their own resources. All venues are initially checked for health and safety and there is a programme of risk assessment. Tutors are asked to check venues annually for health and safety, but this is carried out with varying degrees of success.

Equality of opportunity   Contributory grade 2

28. MAES is strongly committed to widening participation. It actively seeks to remove barriers to learning and has developed a wide range of good strategies to engage new learners. Disadvantaged communities and areas of the community with the highest levels of social and economic deprivation are specifically targeted. The locations used for learning are in wards with the highest levels of social and economic deprivation. There is an effective response to different cultural and social needs, for example by providing appropriate and relevant ESOL provision.

29. Highly developed partnerships with a range of organisations assist and contribute to the widening participation agenda. A number of ongoing projects have been developed to specifically target parts of the community who are recognised as either under-represented or who have a specific need. These include a successful neighbourhood learning in disadvantaged communities project that focuses on developing and recruiting learners from some of the most deprived wards in the city. Good contribution by partners and use of roadshows effectively promote this scheme. Effective use has been made of volunteers from the community to assist in the scheme. These have been trained to level 2 in initial advice and guidance so that they are equipped to assist in the project.

30. A scheme for registered carers provides them with learning opportunities and respite from the carer role. A driving project supports unemployed people to achieve the driving theory test. Good incentives are provided by way of supported practical driving lessons on successful completion of the theory test. By achieving the full licence opportunities for employment are improved. A wide range of free taster courses are offered at different times and days to encourage new learners to use the service.

31. Good partnerships have been developed with the youth service in developing accredited programmes to support disaffected 14-16 year olds. These are successful in developing skills that enable them to gain work placements.

32. The LEA has a detailed equality and diversity strategy that focuses on all the relevant key components of race, gender, age and vulnerable groups. It has set targets for

improvement in terms of recruitment in each of these areas which are reasonable, yet challenging. It uses a number of innovative schemes to try to achieve these targets, and in many cases is being successful. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups has increased and is not greater than the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the local geographical area. There are schemes to increase the participation of men which is still low in many areas of learning. The monitoring of these targets is good and is carried out by individual area co-ordinators who use area of learning log books. However, there is no overview to monitor success or achievement of the targets. The management information system currently being used is not able to produce reports that interrogate data effectively.

33. There are effective support mechanisms for learners in place to help them access the available provision. There are two ways in which this support can be identified. Initially at enrolment learners can identify needs and there are good efforts to make arrangements for them to be met. Secondly, after enrolment, tutors can identify learners who have support needs and bring them to the attention of appropriate staff. Support is available through a well-developed fee remission system which allows over 60 per cent of learners to receive full fee remission. Another 20 per cent of learners receive up to 60 per cent fee remission. Full fees are retained at very low levels. Support is also available for provision of course materials as well as transport to venues and centres. The promotion of the support available; however, is not prominent in the prospectus.

34. The LEA has completed a full audit of all venues and facilities to ensure they comply with the revised Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Although many of the facilities are not directly owned by the adult learning department, the audit identifies non-compliance so that issues and potential difficulties can be predicted and actions taken for learners with access requirements. There is a facilities strategy and efforts are being made to work with facility owners to resolve compliance issues from the audit.

35. There is a complaints procedure that is part of a comments, compliments and complaints process. There are few complaints but they are recorded and followed through to completion in an effective manner.

Quality assurance   Contributory grade 2

36. There is good use of quality assurance processes and this strength was identified in the self-assessment report. MAES's quality assurance system is based on the principles of continuous improvement. There are many examples of continuous improvement in the service, which have had a positive impact on learners: such as an increase in retention, achievement and progression routes. MAES has a clear cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation. The quality assurance standards it uses are those set out in the 'Common Inspection Framework'. Area of learning co-ordinators are making a positive impact on performance management and quality assurance. Log books and course files are used to help each area of learning identify their strengths and weaknesses through ongoing self-assessment. All of the evidence collected through the service's quality assurance procedures is collated in the course file. This includes learners' surveys, tutors' observations and internal and external verifier reports. The area co-ordinators

complete the logbooks, which are closely monitored by the development manager. Records of monitoring analysis and actions taken are kept in the logbook. Good practice is shared across areas of learning.

37. Performance monitoring is generally good. All tutors are given the quality assurance manual and tutor support material on CD-ROM. The CD-ROM contains procedures, strategies and forms for all aspects of tutors' work. MAES is working hard to standardise procedures by introducing standard lesson plans and individual learning plans. This is a considerable change in the culture of the adult education service and a minority of tutors are not willing to accept the changes. This affects the quality of the monitoring of learning. MAES is working hard to encourage them to change their views and action is taken by senior mangers when necessary. Although the new system is good, its application is sometimes variable. For example, some lesson plans are completed very well and others are not. Some tutors are still developing and using their own paperwork. Staff have received training in quality assurance, quality procedures, and preparing for inspection.

38. Learners' views are sought through participation in dynamic learner focus groups, through questionnaires, course reviews and through individual discussions. The views of non-learners are also sought through a project funded by the neighbourhood in deprived learning communities which uses information, advice and guidance workers to discuss with community members their learning requirements.

39. Retention rates are closely monitored and are showing clear improvements. Learners in classes which have poor retention rates receive a learner survey and are invited to participate in a focus group. All the learners who have left the programme are contacted by telephone and are asked questions based on the 'Common Inspection Framework'. MAES tries hard to implement changes to the programme to satisfy those learners.

40. MAES carries out tutor observations which are used as the basis for staff development. The procedure and criteria are understood by staff, who receive timely and useful feedback on their performance. All tutors are observed on a two-yearly basis and new tutors are observed within the first two terms. Observations are carried out by area co-ordinators from inside and outside the area of learning. Awarded grades are moderated by the development manager. Staff feel the lesson observation system is useful and helpful. Grades given by inspectors were, in some areas, lower than those given by MAES. However, MAES had accurately predicted this in the self-assessment report.

41. Internal moderation in most areas of learning is good and is satisfactory in others. All staff understand the internal moderation procedure, which is the same for accredited and non-accredited courses. Co-ordinators internally moderate courses in their area of learning and share their findings with other area co-ordinators. Internal moderation of literacy and numeracy training includes initial assessment and action-planning. Internal standardisation takes place. Tutors sign the moderation form to say that they have received feedback. There are good examples of moderation highlighting problems. For

example, in IT, internal moderation identified portfolio-building as a weakness. The issue was discussed with the team and comprehensive staff training took place. It is too early to see if this has led to an improvement in portfolios. MAES participates in regional standardisation meetings with other providers and this includes sharing good practice. Strengths and weaknesses from external verifiers' visits are recorded in the logbooks and are acted on.

42. The self-assessment process is satisfactory, but most of the findings are generated by the area co-ordinators, not the tutors. Although they have seen the self-assessment report, part-time tutors had limited involvement in producing it. In most areas of learning, and in leadership and management, inspectors identified the same strengths and weaknesses as MAES, but inspectors also identified additional strengths. Leadership and management are descriptive rather than evaluative and over-emphasises the audit commission's best value framework.

43. MAES does not benefit from the same levels of moderation as other parts of the education department. For example, the council employs an external moderator for their school provision, but this does not extend to adult education. The council's two-yearly quality assurance cycle of departments has not yet extended to adult education.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology   Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	894	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good achievement and retention rates
- good progression
- good teaching
- particularly good learning resources

Weaknesses

- incomplete individual learning plans
- insufficient initial assessment

Achievement and standards

44. Achievement on ICT courses is good. In 2002-03, 75 per cent of learners achieved qualifications. In previous years, achievement of qualifications was higher at 85 and 86 per cent. Learners make good progress and retention is good on most courses. In 2002-03, overall retention rates are 91 per cent. There are successful strategies to highlight and deal with retention rates on individual courses operating below 70 per cent. Attendance at observed classes is good at 79 per cent. Attendance is analysed frequently and when issues are identified, actions are successful in resolving them.

45. Progression from entry-level courses to higher-level courses and qualifications is good. The introduction of an entry-level IT course has widened participation and assisted progression, as many learners have no previous experience of computing. Seventy-two per cent of leavers progress to other courses in education and training.

Quality of education and training

46. Seventy-seven per cent of observed teaching is good or better. Lessons are well planned and are supported by detailed lesson plans and schemes of work. Some lesson plans are very detailed and include precise details of learning resources to be used. Tutors take account of a wide range of experience and ability levels. Lessons are interesting and tutors use a variety of teaching methods and activities. Good use is made of visual presentation equipment, in locations where it is available, to provide instruction in application uses and manipulation of data. Tutors establish a good rapport with

learners and encourage them to become involved in discussions and to participate in activities. Tutors use plain language when explaining computing terminology, which is particularly appreciated by learners who are new to ICT. Learners receive much individual support from tutors. Most learners benefit from small teaching groups with plenty of opportunities to practise skill development. Good use is made of small-group work in classes which promotes peer and independent learning. Tutors demonstrate patience and sensitivity with learners during lessons. Appropriate questioning techniques are used to confirm knowledge and understanding.

47. Learning resources are particularly good. ICT courses are very well supported by professionally presented handouts and materials for independent study. Tutors are provided with a CD-ROM containing standardised training and learning materials. This ensures consistency across the area of learning, irrespective of the location or the tutor delivering the course. Some centres have excellent resources including multimedia projectors, webcams, headphones and the latest operating systems and software. All tutors are qualified to teach and have appropriate vocational qualifications and experience. Most centres provide a good learning environment. However, one centre has insufficient up-to-date software and two centres are not equipped with adjustable chairs. One centre does not yet have internet access although the courses require this. Formal risk assessments of ICT resources have not taken place. Part-time tutors do not have sufficient storage space and examination work has been stolen. Learners will have to re-take their examinations.

48. Assessment practice is satisfactory and meets awarding body standards. Assessment is provided by either examinations or by portfolios of printed work. Assessment is regular and carried out frequently. Tutors use awarding body documents for examination work and internally produced assessment material for other courses. Monitoring of progress forms takes place to record satisfactory completion of induction and units of the qualification.

49. There is an adequate range of ICT courses available from entry to advanced level. These are located across the borough to provide ease of access for learners. Courses meet the needs of learners for personal and professional purposes. The range of qualifications has been extended to include non-examination-based qualifications to attract more mature learners who are not motivated by formal qualifications.

50. Learners receive appropriate advice and guidance which enables them to choose an appropriate course. One centre has a formal partnership with information, advice and guidance services. Learners receive an effective induction into ICT courses and are able to receive additional ICT learning support by attending flexible learning computer suites. All learners receive an induction which includes the course content, health and safety, equality of opportunity and learners' rights and responsibilities. There is on going assessment and systems to monitor and review learners' progress.

51. Individual learning plans are incomplete. Plans have recently been introduced and are not being used consistently. They focus on recording learners' personal goals and do not record specific learning objectives. There are insufficient guidelines to help tutors

complete a meaningful individual learning plan. Plans do not provide short and realistic goals and targets from which learners' progress can be measured. Some learners do not see the relationship between individual learning plans and their course aims. Most tutors maintain course books to record continuous progress by learners.

52. Initial assessment is insufficient to accurately determine learners' prior experience, qualifications and additional learning support. Initial assessment systems are informal and are not routinely recorded. Tutors observe learners but do not use diagnostic tools to make objective decisions. Learners on entry-level computing courses have the opportunity to gain accreditation in the communication key skill. This is a recently introduced initiative to increase the identification of additional literacy needs and subsequent referral to appropriate specialist courses. However, assessment levels are inappropriate, as they are only aimed at level 1 of the key skills. Initial assessment tools are not used to identify if learners are either below or above this level.

Leadership and management

53. There are regular observations of lessons which contribute to development activities. There are established systems for staff appraisal and these form part of the ICT development plan. Staff are set appropriate targets for achievement and retention. There is an active staff development programme, with 12 staff recently trained in literacy and numeracy needs. Improvements to resources have resulted from this training. There are regular team meetings as part of course reviews, and development issues are dealt with. For example, new programmes are being offered to attract more men into ICT training. Learners are knowledgeable of the LEA's complaints system. Internal verification satisfactorily identifies and works towards resolving areas of weakness. The ICT co-ordinator moderates all internal verifier decisions to ensure consistency of assessment practices. Equality of opportunity policies and procedures are appropriate. Appeals and complaints procedures are communicated to learners during the induction and are displayed in main sites.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel   Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	214	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good achievements in cake decorating
- wide range of benefits for learners in sport

Weaknesses

- insufficient emphasis on progression opportunities in sport
- no standard health screening process used in sport

Achievement and standards

54. The achievement of open college network qualifications is good in cake decorating. Once on the programme, learners are able to choose whether to register for the qualification which is offered at levels 1, 2 and 3. In 2000-01, 64 per cent of registered learners achieved the qualification. In 2001-02, it was 89 per cent and in 2003-03, it was 100 per cent. Only cake decoration provision in this area is accredited.

55. Learners gain a wide range of benefits including attending sport and leisure classes. These include good development and maintenance of their fitness including flexibility, mobility and general fitness levels. Learners interviewed spoke of other benefits such as stress reduction and improvements in emotional well being. Activities also make a good contribution to recovery from ill health, surgery or injury. Learners also benefit from the social inter-action that takes place at these sessions. A supportive, friendly atmosphere is developed by tutors and participants. Many tutors organise additional social events for groups as well. Courses operate at times and venues that allow good access to a range of participants.

56. There is a variety of performance levels in sport and leisure classes, depending on the particular aims of participants. In yoga classes there is good development of performance and skills, ranging from the ability to fully relax, to increased flexibility and improved posture. In keep-fit classes, participants work to a range of aerobic impact that best suits their ability and desire for personal development. Movement co-ordination is well developed.

Quality of education and training

57. Teaching is satisfactory or better. Tutors use a range of teaching styles to suit the needs of participants. In many courses that are non-accredited, the main emphasis is on recreation and participation rather than the achievement of clear learning goals and objectives. The tutors' responses are becoming more positive to the new quality systems that attempt to monitor learners' goals. However, in some instances, there is still some resistance to this changing culture.

58. Schemes of work and session plans for non-accredited courses often have insufficient detail. Learners' skills are not linked sufficiently to previous or subsequent learning sessions. Session plans outline content but do not include details of teaching methods, session organisations or resources. Session reviews do not focus on learners' achievement or development. Neither do they consider the tutors' performance in supporting continuous improvement.

59. Learners learn new skills in most courses, although there are some learners whose main focus is on recreation and participation and they resist or decline coaching or instruction. Activity rates in all observed sessions were good and all participants enjoyed the sessions.

60. Most of the staff are suitably qualified and are encouraged and supported by way of annual appraisal to maintain and update their qualifications. Staff training is available free of charge to full- and part-time tutors. All part-time staff are paid while attending staff training events and other meetings which are arranged by the provider. This is a good incentive for staff. Venues are generally satisfactory although some rooms are not always clean enough for floor-based activities such as yoga. Some tutors supply equipment for classes, even though there is a system for them to identify resource needs. Some centres and venues used for exercise and keep-fit classes, do not have the full range of equipment to enhance these types of activities.

61. Assessment on accredited courses fully meets awarding body requirements. Non-accredited courses are less-formally assessed, although the new system of course log books is more effective at focusing tutors on individual learning objectives. Individual assessment of performance does take place on the sport courses and some appropriate instruction and coaching is delivered to improve performance.

62. There are a small range of courses offered, but they meet the needs of the current learners. There is some matching of this provision against what is also offered by the council's leisure department and by commercial and voluntary sector provision.

Leadership and management

63. There is insufficient emphasis on developing progression opportunities within the non-accredited courses. Marketing and promotion of these courses do not clearly identify a target group in terms of ability level, nor do they clearly indicate a learning

outcome. This allows many repeat registrations on some courses, often over many years, and this does not support and contribute to the objective of widening participation and attracting new learners in all instances. There is an insufficient range of courses to cater for learners of all abilities.

64. Although some sports tutors gather information about individual needs, there is no formal process or documents to gather information about health or injury issues before starting a course. One tutor has developed their own version, but it is not sufficiently comprehensive.

65. The new systems introduced to monitor learning goals and to develop individual learning plans are good, but they are not universally accepted by all learners and tutors.

Visual & performing arts & media   Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	351	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good standard of technical skills
- good teaching in most classes
- good range of learning activities in most classes

Weaknesses

- some poor accommodation and practical resources
- weak use of individual learning plans
- insufficient information on material costs

Achievement and standards

66. Learners reach good standards in their technical skills. Detailed knowledge and understanding of their chosen subject is effectively applied in many practical projects, particularly in art, sewing, singing and stained glass. Learners in art and crafts classes build an extensive portfolio of the skills learned each week. In singing classes, learners develop good breath control, harmonisation and confidence for solo public performances. Learners in the music class hold an end-of-term concert for their families and friends. In art, stained glass and dance, learners also make good progress.

67. Courses in this area were not accredited until September 2003 when 70 per cent of the programme became accredited. Sixty-four learners are registered for dressmaking, and guitar for beginners. Courses are not yet complete, and there are no achievements so far. Retention rates are good. During the week of inspection attendance was 85 per cent.

Quality of education and training

68. Learners benefit from good teaching in most sessions. Experienced tutors have in-depth technical competence. Many are practicing artists with their own local businesses. Effective demonstrations by tutors enable learners to develop a good understanding of practical and creative skills in art, stained glass, crafts and dance. The demonstrations set high standards to which learners can aim. Tutors make good use of a wide range of visual reference materials and books, and good-quality handouts are used in some classes. Good rapport between tutors and learners supports and encourages learning. Learners benefit from regular verbal feedback and constructive criticism. Four

learners in this area of learning have additional learning needs, two of whom are being informally monitored, and two have individual lesson plans.

69. There is a good range of learning activities in most classes. Learners carry out a variety of demanding practical tasks and activities. At the beginning of the stained glass course, learners learn three important techniques and use them effectively to produce small pieces of work using each process. These techniques are further developed and used throughout the course to create their own work. Learners are challenged to examine and develop their own personal perceptions of art. Subjects are varied, for example, at the inspection one class was studying a local beauty spot. Learners' had a lively discussion of their memories of the area. An electronic presentation showing views of the area was simultaneously running to support the discussion. Some tutors enrich their lessons with outside visits. Many learners in the upholstery class go to auctions and antique fairs. Awareness of techniques used by artists and crafts people is raised by visits to galleries, exhibitions and craft fairs.

70. The range of courses is satisfactory. A wide, but traditional, range of classes in two- and three-dimensional art and crafts, and music and dance is available. The geographical spread and location of centres across the borough provides good local access for learners in community centres, schools and council learning centres.

71. There is some poor accommodation. Learning is restricted by rooms that are too small for the numbers of learners and the practical nature of the work. Access is difficult in two centres, where lifts are some distance from the classroom. Learners at one upholstery class have to carry bulky furniture some way from the lift to the classroom. At another centre the classroom is too small for the upholstery class to operate safely and comfortably. In sewing classes, tables are too small for cutting out material. In one centre the youth club, in the room next door, was noisy and the tutor has to raise her voice to talk to the class. Art classes are popular, but some rooms are too small for the number of people in them. Some art rooms have no sink facilities and the provision of consumable resources and basic essential equipment is inadequate. Most learners are dependent on tutors providing these. For instance, one tutor brought in specialist china paint for learners to buy. A dance tutor uses her own tape deck.

72. Many individual learning plans include activities to be carried out, rather than learning goals. Individual goal-setting is poor and learners are not always able to identify what they need to do to improve. On non-accredited courses, record-keeping is weak. Some tutors do not have the correct paperwork and some design their own. Learners in some classes complain about the amount of paperwork they complete every week, while others complete no paperwork at all.

73. Some information sheets are available for a few courses, but they are not comprehensive. They do not explain what learners should bring to the first class or the high costs of essential equipment for some courses. Although equipment can be built up over the duration of the course, consumables such as watercolour paper and acrylic paints for art classes, specialist paper for card-making and dressmaking patterns are expensive. This information is not given until after enrolment. The system in place for

buying equipment is not used by most tutors. One class has a title which does not adequately reflect the course content.

Leadership and management

74. The curriculum in this area is well managed, but there is no specialist expertise in visual and performing arts. There is no forum to deal with new curriculum development, for example in the integration of ICT into the arts curriculum. There is very good support for staff development. New tutors are observed in the first month and have a one-term probationary period. Tutors are satisfied with the support they receive. Quality assurance arrangements are in place, but are not yet fully established. Documents for monitoring are not used in the same way by each tutor and some tutors have been resistant to their introduction. This is more evident on non-accredited courses. Marketing is satisfactory. A free newspaper is distributed across the borough, and posters and leaflets are also displayed in libraries, doctors' surgeries and post offices.

English, languages & communications   Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	401	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good attainment and achievement rates
- good teaching in most sessions
- particularly well-managed BSL provision

Weaknesses

- poor access to resources at some venues

Achievement and standards

75. Learners' attainment is good, overall. Most learners develop the skills they need to benefit from their programmes of study. In modern foreign languages they learn to speak, listen, read, and when appropriate, write in the language they are studying. In a BSL lesson, learners were able to sign sentences and stories effectively, using appropriate body language and facial expression to enhance communication. On the whole, achievement rates are good. In BSL classes, for 2002-03, more than three-quarters of level 1 learners completed the course successfully. In a level 2 Spanish class, all the participants completed the programme, and 76 per cent were successful at the end of the course.

76. Learners' spoken language is at least satisfactory in terms of pronunciation, intonation and vocabulary in most modern language lessons. In the best lessons, it is very good. Where teachers use more English in their communication with learners; however, learners' fluency is impaired. The skills of reading, listening and writing are consistently practised, and standards are generally in line with expectations.

77. There has been an upward trend in the number of learners registering for both modern foreign languages and sign language in the past three years. This has levelled out this year. Retention is satisfactory overall, though there are variations between programmes. For example, retention on BSL level 2 courses had fallen sharply. Strategies are in place to deal with this, and learners are given comprehensive information on the demands of the course. Attendance and punctuality are generally good, with 93 per cent attendance in classes during the inspection.

Quality of education and training

78. Most teaching is good, with 63 per cent good or better. Tutors plan and manage learning sessions well. In the best lessons the foreign language is used exclusively and the subject matter is intellectually challenging. For instance, in a German lesson the learners gave a presentation in the foreign language on an antique object brought from home. There was a lively discussion and debate in which learners displayed very high levels of fluency, accuracy and spontaneity in the foreign language. Excellent enrichment activities are available to learners of modern foreign languages. For example, learners of German have links with learners of English in Germany, with whom they exchange correspondence and visits. Learners of French engage in cultural activities organised by the tutor, such as French film and theatre evenings and a wine-tasting event. However, there is too much use of English in some lessons. For instance, in a level 2 class, the foreign language was not always used for everyday classroom communication. Such learners are not exposed to or do not practise the language as much as they could, which restricts their progress.

79. Learners' work is regularly monitored and tutors give appropriate feedback. Accreditation routes are available on all courses, although some modern foreign language learners expressed indifference or even resistance to the notion of taking qualifications. In sign language, tutors have worked together with the curriculum co-ordinator to produce exemplar materials for gathering and reporting assessment data.

80. The needs and interests of learners of sign language are met by the provision of these programmes. Many learners travel some distance to attend the courses, which they attend in order to communicate with colleagues, members of the public or friends and family. In modern foreign languages, the range and levels of languages offered are determined by surveying community needs, and where possible, in response to learners' demand. Learners' motivation for studying range from business to personal reasons. For example, a group of learners of Greek included a learner with Greek-speaking grandchildren, a learner setting up a business in Greece, and a learner with a Greek spouse, as well as those with a love of the culture and a wish to communicate while on holiday.

81. The availability, appropriateness and accuracy of pre-course information and guidance are satisfactory overall. For instance, learners report a range of access routes to information, such as looking at mail-shots, library copies of the service prospectus, the internet and by direct enquiries. In one case a learner was interviewed by the tutor in the foreign language on the telephone, to establish which course would be best for him. Other learners completed initial assessment tasks on arrival at the first class. In some cases; however, learners considered that the choice of course they registered for was left entirely up to them. Tutors of modern foreign languages were observed giving additional support to learners who had joined classes late in the programme.

82. Most tutors carry their own equipment and visual aids with them from venue to venue. Some rooms in schools are equipped with computers, overhead projectors and

tape recorders, but tutors are not always able to access them. Audiovisual equipment can sometimes be booked from venues in advance, but many tutors carry and use their own. In one case, a tutor made very good use of available resources by using a television set as a display screen for an electronic presentation. Learners report that classes in some venues are difficult to find or access, and one took place on the first floor of a building with no lift.

Leadership and management

83. BSL curriculum management is particularly responsive to tutors' needs. Sign language is the first language of tutors who are profoundly deaf. Their English is therefore not of a high standard, and their needs have been taken into account in developing quality assurance procedures. Sample documents and joint-writing tasks have been drawn up in partnership, and meetings are attended by an interpreter and a note-taker. In addition, strategies for this year to deal with lower than average retention on the level 2 course have been successful, and all students who enrolled are still on the programme. When a venue proved unsuitable for evening classes due to security concerns and poor heating, it was timetabled for day time classes only.

84. Staff development is available and taken up, although opportunities to take subject-based training are limited. Curriculum systems and policies are understood and are in action at all levels. For example, all tutors use the course file and log book system, and employ measures to deal with recruitment and retention issues where appropriate.

85. Adequate quality assurance procedures are in place. Some of these systems are relatively new and are still becoming established. For example, the level of detail in lesson plans varies from extensive to rudimentary. Useful data are collected, such as those relating to retention and achievement, and on learner ethnicity, gender and age. However, some data are difficult to obtain. The curriculum co-ordinator and development manager observe classes and give feedback to tutors. All tutors are fully involved with the curriculum co-ordinator in self-assessment procedures.

86. Tutors and managers are aware of the provider's policies on equality of opportunity, and due care is given to monitoring data on recruitment.

Foundation programmes   Grade 1

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	482	1

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good achievement in accredited qualifications in ESOL
- very good attainment of literacy, numeracy and language skills
- some very good teaching and learning
- particularly effective initial assessment for literacy and numeracy
- responsive provision to meet cultural and community learning needs
- particularly effective support for learners
- good resources
- very good management
- good partnerships

Weaknesses

- some poor learning environments

Achievement and standards

87. Approximately 30 per cent of learners on ESOL programmes register for external qualifications. Of the 67 learners registered in 2002-03, 86 per cent were successful. This compares well with the 60 per cent achievement of those entered in 2001-02 and is well above the national average of around 52 per cent. Fewer registrations for external qualifications are made in literacy and numeracy. In 2002-03 only 15 per cent of the 443 learners registered for a qualification. However, achievements for those who register are good. For example, 84 per cent passed the new national tests at level 1 or 2, and every learner who registered for open college network accreditation at entry level or level 1 was successful. Fifty-six per cent passed other external entry-level qualifications.

88. All learners are proud of the progress they are making. They can say clearly how their learning is helping them in their everyday lives. They measure their attainment in terms of the improvements that colleagues, family and friends can observe, as well as against their individual learning plans. The attainment of literacy, numeracy and language skills is very good. Learners develop confidence, motivation and personal skills. For example, a Kurdish speaker no longer needs an interpreter when he visits his solicitor or his doctor. One student felt able to use a coffee shop as a result of attending a literacy class. Another now goes shopping on his own because his improved numeracy skills gave him the necessary confidence to do so. Learners are enthusiastic about their learning and their future objectives.

89. Learners are able to develop at their own pace. MAES is still developing measures to record learners' progress, but there has been a recent improvement in the setting and monitoring of learning targets. These are used to measure progress against learning objectives as well as against personal development targets where they are appropriate.

90. There is good lateral progression by learners between courses at a similar level, and a few examples of progression to higher-level courses. One learner started a two-hour literacy and numeracy class and has now moved on to study access to nursing. There are good arrangements for ESOL learners to progress to a nearby college of further education.

Quality of education and training

91. There is good, or very good teaching in most classes. Seventy-seven per cent of lesson observations were good or better. One ESOL session was outstanding. Plans and schemes of work for literacy and numeracy and ESOL are well developed and staff have a good understanding of learners' needs and different learning styles. Tutors use a good variety of teaching methods and many use a multi-sensory approach to teaching. There is effective use of computers as a tool for teaching literacy, and many of the learners who have literacy and numeracy needs are also developing computer literacy skills which are used with imagination and flair. For example, e-mails are used to enhance the teaching of reading and writing. An exercise is used to teach the need for capital letters. In all sessions, the learners are constantly engaged and interested. Tutors for literacy and numeracy use individual, paired and group work to enable learners who have a poor attention span to move around the classroom. Teaching is adapted in response to learners' interests or learning needs. For example, some learners produced a newsletter as part of their literacy coursework. The newsletter helps to promote awareness of both mental health and the lives of people recovering from mental illness. ESOL tutors use a range of resources and materials, and many effective and creative resources are developed by the tutors themselves. All the materials are used were relevant to ESOL learners. In one session, language relating to shopping was of immediate relevance to a group of women. It used a variety of teaching methods, including games which learners would be able to practise with their own children. Many tutors are able to use learners' mistakes sensitively to reinforce learning and to develop their thinking. Tutors have a very good rapport with learners and are careful to involve and encourage them all. Tutors are attentive and encourage self-reliance. They are sensitive to the needs of vulnerable learners and are quick to offer help when it is needed.

92. All learners have an initial exploratory interview to discover their learning interests and concerns. In literacy and numeracy this is followed by well-managed diagnostic assessment. Skills for Life assessment materials are being introduced to use alongside, or instead of, materials produced by staff. Detailed analysis focuses on diagnosed areas of weakness, and assessment of preferred learning style This helps to create short-term objectives and long-term goals in effective individual learning plans, which are linked to the curriculum. Each learner is entitled to up to three hours of individual time in which to

complete this process. It can be carried out over several weeks and can take place at a venue of the learner's choice. The individual learning plan is reviewed and revised at regular intervals to ensure that it relates to the learner's initial interview and the achievement of their goals. It is monitored by the tutor and is subject to a comprehensive internal moderation process. In ESOL, initial assessment has been reviewed and is being replaced with an improved diagnostic procedure, but the present system is appropriate to assess learners' needs. The documents and procedures used to record progress and plan future learning are also under review, but are currently adequate for their purpose.

93. MAES is very responsive to the cultural and community learning needs in its area. There is a wide range of literacy and ESOL courses at a variety of levels. Courses are developed to meet the needs and interests of different groups of learners in the community. They are well promoted and well marketed with a variety of attractive titles. Short courses for literacy and numeracy focus on a range of interesting and relevant topics such as financial management for young fine defaulters. MAES is alert to new opportunities to provide literacy and numeracy and ESOL teaching in non-traditional settings and develops effective new partnerships to progress these ideas. Classes for Muslim women are held in the local mosque in response to their needs. ESOL classes are provided for shift workers from a local factory in response to a request from the local union. Learners say that their new knowledge is of immediate use to them. Literacy and numeracy provision is available in a range of locations, for example, numeracy classes in a factory; literacy classes in a sheltered workshop; basic skills classes in a drug rehabilitation centre; and communication skills to people recovering from mental health problems in an NHS institution. Over half the workers at the sheltered workshop now attend literacy and numeracy classes. The benefits of the classes extend beyond the learners themselves and improve the morale of the institution and develop skills in other levels of the workforce. One factory manager has now been trained as an assistant tutor for literacy and numeracy. Good links exist between outreach centres and MAES centres. For example, learners from the mental health project are encouraged to attend the drop-in centre when they are discharged. Classes are offered at a range of times and localities. Many ESOL learners have transport difficulties and only attend because the classes are in their local area. Some of these are areas of high deprivation. Provision of literacy and numeracy classes at one local centre is made possible in the evening because MAES pays for a security guard.

94. The support for learners is particularly effective. All learners who request information about literacy and numeracy are invited to attend to ensure their choice of class is appropriate. Simple pre-course information is available on a customised website, cited by many learners as their first point of enquiry. Staff have a good rapport with learners and are sensitive to their needs. They have received training to equip them to work effectively with learners who have particular support needs. This includes awareness of dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalcula, and a good understanding of disability legislation. Retention of six learners was assured as a result of moving them from a group session to individual, specialist dyslexia support. Partners who work with refugees and asylum seekers provide comprehensive support for ESOL learners. These partners are often the first point of contact and refer learners to MAES. There are effective

arrangements for ESOL support for learners who have a disability. There is time at the end of each ESOL session for tutorials either to help individuals with their studies or to update individual learning plans. Additional funding is sought for adapted equipment for learners who have a disability. Most classes are small and classroom assistants support learners in many of the sessions. Assistants are briefed before the literacy and numeracy lessons and make a good contribution to learning. Whenever there is an assessed need, a multi-lingual support worker works alongside ESOL class tutors to provide additional support. Individual achievement is recognised and learners are encouraged to support each other. Success is recognised by in-house certificates, photographic displays and awards events.

95. There is a good range of up-to-date teaching resources to support the delivery of the curriculum. Every tutor has access to an inventory of all resources supplied to classrooms which are available to borrow. Each flexible learning centre is provided with a range of resources including workbooks, supporting texts, videos and CD-ROMS for computer-aided learning. The flexible learning centres are well equipped with personal computers and all but one has access to the internet. E-mail is used effectively for teaching communication skills. Where centres do not have these facilities, laptop computers are available, but these do not always have the facility to connect to the internet. ESOL is combined with ICT where a need is identified. ESOL learners also have access to new audio equipment.

96. Tutors for literacy and numeracy, and most ESOL classes use Skills for Life material which is available on CD-ROM. Materials are matched to the adult ESOL curriculum and some tutors customise them to suit the context or needs of individual learners. Many ESOL tutors develop their own written resources which are innovative and of excellent quality. However, both the ESOL Skills for Life materials and the tutor workbook are published in colour, but they are reproduced in black and white. This makes it impossible to complete exercises where colour is an issue. Where photographs are reproduced, they are sometimes unclear, which makes it difficult to use the material to complete learning tasks. Resources are also created by tutors using current or local materials. For example, maps and records from local archives were used to support and inspire a history project in an entry-level writing project. The material was made accessible to readers with low literacy levels through selected enlargement and highlighting of key sentences. This created non-patronising materials with an intellectual content. A digital camera is used to record outings, to provide prompts for later discussion, and to illustrate subsequent creative writing projects in a group.

97. Learners in literacy and numeracy classes are provided with attractive folders in which to collect their work and record their own progress. However, in most ESOL classes, learners are given a considerable amount of single-sheet handouts of varying quality. These are easily lost or soiled and it is difficult for learners to keep their work in a format that will be useful to them later. The provision of resources in support of the teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. However, some classes take place in accommodation which is shared with other providers and resources have to be carried in by the tutor. This limits the range available to learners.

98. The full-time ESOL co-ordinator and 17 part-time tutors are all appropriately qualified and experienced. All tutors for literacy are adequately qualified and most are well qualified, especially in additional specialisms. However, fewer tutors are qualified to teach numeracy. Classroom assistants are trained and used effectively to support learning.

99. The accommodation is generally appropriate. Many classrooms are attractively and appropriately furnished and several are carpeted. However, there are some poor learning environments. One class takes place in a large hall which is a throughway for school children. Another is poorly furnished and teaching is interrupted by noise from other parts of the community centre.

Leadership and management

100. The foundation programme is well managed. Although ESOL, and literacy and numeracy have different co-ordinators, there is effective formal and informal communication between them and family learning. There is good communication between teams and tutors, with regular meetings and frequent informal contact. There is a well-established strategy which was developed in consultation with area strategies for literacy and numeracy. Co-ordinators are active in regional groups. They have been fully involved with the Skills for Life agenda and have disseminated information effectively to teaching staff. Staff development is good. All tutors have attended curriculum training, and tutors are encouraged to attend specialist training and conferences related to literacy and numeracy training. Quality assurance arrangements are good. These include twice-yearly internal moderation of non-accredited training covering learning plans, learning materials, use of the core curriculum and target-setting. The effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements is evident in the level of consistency between centres. Staff have contributed to the preparation of the self-assessment report and to debates on changes and improvements in their area of work. There are regular, recorded peer observations of teaching and learning. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and the teaching profile closely matches that identified during inspection.

101. Expertise is shared between staff and colleagues who work in partner agencies. A wide and cohesive network of partner agencies work with asylum seekers and refugees. This provides a good source of referrals to ESOL classes and a comprehensive support service for learners. Strong personal and professional links have been formed among staff from the various agencies. Very effective partnerships with other providers support the development of complementary provision. For example, some ESOL tutors work for MAES and the local college of further education. Learners are provided with a progression route beyond level 1 where familiar faces from both providers assist the learner in the transition. Other partnerships have promoted good staff awareness of working with people with learning disabilities and people recovering from a mental illness.

Family learning   Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	98	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good achievement rates
- very good progression
- some very good teaching
- flexible and responsive provision
- good programme management

Weaknesses

- some unsuitable accommodation
- weak use of individual learning plans

Achievement and standards

102. Achievement rates for accredited courses are good. Most learners take the option of gaining accreditation for their learning. In the period 2000-03, almost 90 per cent registered for accreditation. Over the three years, an average of 68 per cent of all learners achieved their accreditation, mostly at level 1. The achievement rate for 2002-03 is almost 80 per cent. This is a 13 per cent increase from 2000-01. Achievement measured against the number of learners who register for accreditation is slightly higher over the three years. The number of registered learners who are successful has increased. In 2000-01, 12 per cent of registered learners were not successful. This has decreased to less than 3 per cent in 2002-03. Many more learners are now achieving level 2 accreditation.

103. Learners' progression is very good. Learners progress in a wide variety of ways. Many increase their confidence and self-esteem and aims are raised. Just over half progress into further learning or employment. In some cases, this represents a significant change in their life. Many progress from informal involvement in voluntary work in their children's school and their community, to paid work as classroom assistants. One is now on a foundation degree and plans to train as a teacher when her children are older. Others are active as school governors. Two groups have been nominated for national awards in recognition of their work in the community. They feel that they can provide positive role models for other parents to show what can be achieved. Many learners recognise improved family relationships as an outcome of their learning. They are better able to understand what their children are learning and can effectively support them. The provision attracts a number of new learners. For many, this is their first step back into learning since leaving school or having children. Learners interviewed value the

support and encouragement they receive. The family learning team have recently begun to collect and use new learner enrolment and progression data more systematically.

Quality of education and training

104. Half of all lessons observed are good or very good. These lessons are characterised by detailed planning, lively well-paced sessions with a good balance of individual, group and tutor-led learning activities. Well-designed teaching aids and games support effective learning in some classes. Good, flexible use of classroom space promotes a range of different learning activities. Learners are fully engaged throughout lessons and make creative contributions to them. Tutors check understanding regularly. There are clear links in the best lesson-planning with the open college network assessment criteria and the literacy/numeracy core curriculum. Lesson plans are in place for every lesson observed, but some lesson plans do not clearly identify content, assessment criteria or literacy/numeracy implications in detail. No sessions were less than satisfactory. Staff are well qualified. Almost all are qualified teachers and have a wide range of other qualifications which are appropriate to family learning. These include qualifications in teaching literacy and numeracy, ESOL, counselling, food, and health.

105. A wide-ranging regional curriculum framework at level 1 and 2 supports effective family learning. There are many opportunities for learning across a broad curriculum range which includes literacy, numeracy, health, personal development, and in issues such as drugs misuse. Learners, groups and partners are actively involved in negotiating learning activities. A standard framework can be used or it can be adapted to meet particular needs. The family learning team are proactive in meeting identified interests. Some courses are individually designed, and can be added to the curriculum framework for other groups to use. The timing and location of all courses specifically meets the needs of parents who have childcare responsibilities.

106. Assessment of accredited learning is satisfactory. Learners complete structured workbooks or compile portfolios for assessment which are clearly cross-referenced to assessment criteria. Some learners are actively involved in self-assessment. Record-keeping of assessment is adequate.

107. Support for learners is satisfactory. Additional learning support is available when a need is identified. For example, one woman receives additional support outside of her family learning class which enables her to keep up with others in the class. Crèche, or other childcare provision is available for parents with pre-school children.

108. Some rooms, mostly those in schools, are unsuitable for adults. Some rooms are too small for the number of learners and in others there is no table space. Learners rest work on their knees or a chair if one is available. In another room the table is too big for the room and there is no room for movement. One room is not well lit and others have poor decoration. Heating can be difficult to control. Sometimes there is insufficient heat and in another location the room was too warm. None of the windows could be

opened. School priorities for space result in frequent room changes for some groups. One group reported working in a thoroughfare. When rooms are shared, other users sometimes enter as soon as the session ends and there is no time or space for tutors to talk confidentially to individual learners. Some rooms are poorly equipped, but tutors work hard to overcome these problems. Poor accommodation significantly limits the range and flexibility of teaching and learning activities in some classes.

109. Individual learning plans have been introduced relatively recently but they are not used effectively or consistently. When used they tend to describe activities rather than learning goals. These are often vague and cannot be measured. In some cases individual learning plans are not completed at all. Reviews, if completed, describe completion of activity rather than evaluate achievement of goals. The family learning team has recognised the limitations of the individual learning plan, and is developing a new approach. A more structured individual learning plan is being piloted by one group.

Leadership and management

110. A number of strategies are in place to support good programme management. The co-ordinator maintains a detailed course log to record quality assurance activity. Recruitment and retention data are monitored every three weeks. There is systematic follow up of absences. Communication is good and weekly core team meetings are well planned and recorded. Core staff make a full contribution to discussion and follow-up of action points and they have good knowledge of all developments. There are good links with literacy and numeracy and ESOL teams. Some staff work in more than one aspect of foundation provision. Partnerships with schools and the voluntary sector are particularly good. Partners work effectively together to recruit learners and to plan the programme. Curriculum management is good. Every course uses good workbooks which are produced to a house style. Lesson plans and schemes of work are of a standard design. Regular observation of teaching and learning takes place and staff development is good. Learners' achievements are monitored through each individual course. Achievement is recognised and celebrated through awards and regular nominations are made for national recognition. Formative internal moderation is used to monitor assessment and to provide staff development when needed. Detailed records of end-of-course internal moderation are maintained. A receipt system for workbooks ensures that learners work is safely returned. The family learning programme offered is the same as that offered by other family learning providers in the region. There are good examples where good practice has been shared at regional level, such as in improving the design of key documents. Quality assurance at programme level is good. Learners' feedback is regularly sought and used. A recent partner survey identified some areas for improvement and they were promptly discussed and resolved. The annual self-assessment cycle is based on the 'Common Inspection Framework'. Core staff are involved in the process and in the systematic identification of the evidence. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate.