REINSPECTION REPORT

Poole Adult Learning (Poole LEA) Reinspection

27 May 2005

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. 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
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes 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.

REINSPECTION REPORT

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Poole Adult Learning (PAL) is part of the Borough of Poole unitary authority (the authority), in South Dorset. It provides adult and community learning in and around the borough. PAL offers courses from pre-entry level to level 4 in business administration, management and professional, information and communications technology (ICT), hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, hairdressing and beauty therapy, visual and performing arts and media, humanities, English, languages and communications, foundation studies, including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and family learning. It also offers courses in science and mathematics, land-based and construction, which were not inspected. Humanities and business administration, management and professional programmes had too few learners to be inspected. Funding for these courses is provided by the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Approximately 4,800 learners followed courses during the academic year 2003-04, representing just over 7,700 enrolments, of which 58 per cent were identified as new learners.

2. For most of the academic year 2003-04 the programme was co-ordinated by eight part-time programme co-ordinators. Three of these shared the role of acting curriculum manager. Following a period of consultation, towards the end of the academic year 2003-04, PAL was restructured in September and October 2004. The restructuring created two curriculum management posts, one to lead skills for life, the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, and one to lead the other areas of learning. In addition, a quality management post was created to assist the curriculum managers in improving quality assurance. The provision is co-ordinated by the adult learning manager, nine programme managers, and the two curriculum managers.

3. PAL provides courses in the borough's main adult education centre and over 40 other venues around Poole, including libraries, museums, community centres, churches, a golf centre, a yacht club, and several schools. Family learning courses are operating in 13 of the schools.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

4. In 2003-04, there were 90 courses in ICT, with 809 learners. So far in 2004-05, 41 courses have been completed with 485 learners, leading to 580 enrolments. At the time of reinspection, 19 courses were operating throughout the town, with 229 learners. Most courses lead to qualifications in computer literacy and information technology (IT) at level 1 and 2. Many of these courses last for 20 hours, over 10 weeks. Some level 1 courses operate all year for two-and-a-half hours each week. Flexible learning is also available at level 1, 2 and 3. An examination-based level 3 course has been provided this year. Free taster courses are available at some sites, as an introduction to computing for potential learners. Courses are held during the day and in the evening, at eight community venues

such as libraries, schools and adult education centres. Seventy per cent of learners are women, and 40 per cent of learners are over 60 years of age. Currently, 11 part-time tutors work with the programme manager to provide ICT training.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

5. Three hundred and sixty-seven learners are on adult and community courses in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel. Most courses are non-accredited and include yoga, keep fit and cookery. Accredited courses are offered in food hygiene. Courses take place during the day and in the evening at 14 venues. Most courses take place in schools and community education centres and a number of smaller centres including church halls and swimming pools. Courses take place during the day, in the evening and at weekends. Most classes are targeted at specific groups such as yoga for the over-60s and intermediate level pilates. During the period 2003-04, there were 758 learners. Two per cent of these were from minority ethnic groups and 14 per cent were registered as having a disability or learning difficulty. Approximately 18 tutors generally work between one and five hours each week. Some tutors work at more than one learning centre.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

6. PAL provides courses for adults in hairdressing and holistic therapies taught by nine part-time tutors. These are aromatherapy massage, reflexology, Indian head massage, hairdressing, and manicure with pedicure. The provision is managed by a recently appointed programme manager. Two hundred and three learners are working towards accredited qualifications which are offered from level 1 to level 3. Twenty-seven learners are on non-accredited courses. The non-accredited options include baby massage, and Hopi ear candles. Introductory and intermediate hairdressing are offered as taster courses and as progression routes to national vocational qualification-level hairdressing. PAL continues to offer a provision as part of neighbourhood learning projects which is delivered in Canford Heath Library.

Visual & performing arts & media

7. In 2003-04, 1,207 learners enrolled on visual and performing arts and media courses, representing approximately 33 per cent of PAL's learners. At the time of the reinspection PAL was offering 157 courses operating variously during the day, evening or weekends, of which 46 were accredited courses and 111 non-accredited courses. These courses include art subjects such as watercolours, life drawing, oils and acrylics, botanical painting and therapeutic art classes, crafts such as upholstery, pottery, soft furnishing, stone carving, dressmaking and beadwork, music courses in guitar, music technology, and courses in ballroom dancing, photography, woodwork and silversmithing. PAL offers several 'taster' workshop day courses at weekends throughout the year in subjects such as upholstery, painting in the park and art for beginners. Classes are provided at 12 venues which include schools, a library, the local museum, a day centre, a local employer and local community centres. Courses are offered at entry level to level 3, and range in duration from six to 60 hours. Most learners are aged over 50 years and 28 per cent of them are men. At the time of reinspection there were 579 learners. Nineteen learners are from minority ethnic groups and 158 have an identified learning difficulty and/or disability. Most of the photography and web design courses lead to nationally recognised qualifications. All 37 tutors are part time.

English, languages & communications

8. During the period 2004-05, 762 learners have enrolled on eight externally accredited programmes and 16 non-accredited programmes in English, languages and communications. Twelve of the non-accredited courses are further education funded and four are adult and community learning funded. Enrolments total 855. Seven hundred and eighteen learners are on further education-funded programmes and 44 are on adult and community learning-funded programmes. This represents 15 per cent of PAL's total provision. Sixty-two per cent of the learners are women, 3 per cent are from minority ethnic groups and 8 per cent have learning difficulties or disabilities. Forty-two per cent of the provision takes place in the daytime and 38 per cent during the evening. Most classes last for two hours. Accredited courses operate for three terms and non-accredited courses for 20-24 weeks. Some courses have been extended into the third term in response to learners' requests. Six one-day language taster workshops have been offered at weekends. These courses take place in six centres in Poole and in two libraries, a museum and on two employers' premises. At the time of the reinspection, 321 learners were on further education-funded courses and five were on adult and community learning-funded courses. During the inspection week, portfolio-based accredited courses were operating in Spanish and French at level 1 and 2 and for general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) French. Accredited provision in British Sign Language (BSL) at level 1 and GCSE English is also provided during the day and the evening. Non-accredited courses are offered in holiday Italian and French, French from improvers to advanced level, German from beginners to advanced level, Italian at beginners level, and basic Mandarin Chinese. In addition, during the year, the programme area ran a creative writing course, a literary appreciation course in a local museum, and one-day tasters in Spanish, GCSE Spanish, holiday Spanish and improvers' Italian.

Foundation programmes

9. PAL offers daytime and evening courses in literacy, numeracy, ESOL and independent living skills at its main adult education centre and a number of community centres throughout the borough. The literacy and numeracy team also offers additional learning support throughout the service. During the period 2003-04, 1,450 enrolments were made on foundation programmes. At the time of reinspection, 376 learners were enrolled on literacy and numeracy courses and 152 on ESOL courses. Most classes are for two hours each week, and PAL currently offers one-hour sessions for less confident learners. Most courses operate for 34 weeks each year, and learners can join some of the courses at any point of the programme. At the time of reinspection, PAL offered 32 literacy courses, including short courses and established courses, 14 numeracy courses and 14 ESOL courses. Learners can work towards a literacy or numeracy certificate. Many learners are currently studying for national literacy and numeracy qualifications. The literacy and numeracy team has two part-time managers, 26 part-time tutors and 34 volunteer tutors. The ESOL team has one part-time manager, 10 tutors and six volunteers.

Family learning

10. During 2003-04, 367 learners enrolled on family learning courses through 28 courses and workshops in 13 venues. This represents an increase of about 50 per cent from the previous year. At the time of the reinspection, 123 learners were enrolled on 15 courses in 13 different venues throughout the borough. Courses include family numeracy and 'keeping up with the children', which help parents support their children's learning. The courses range in length from two hours to more than 45 hours. Most courses are offered during the daytime, and have crèche facilities. Three 'Share' courses, part of a national project for bringing families together to learn, are operating in collaboration with staff at three first schools.

11. Other courses include family football, IT for parents, and visual arts workshops. A new programme manager was appointed for family learning in January 2005. She co-ordinates the work of the part-time tutors and plans new courses in response to community demand in partnership with schools and other agencies. Four new partners have joined the family learning programmes since the previous inspection.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	11
Number of inspection days	52
Number of learners interviewed	144
Number of staff interviewed	106
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	37
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	3

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

12. At the previous inspection, the provision was outstanding in family learning, good in ICT and foundation programmes, and satisfactory in business administration, management and professional, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, and visual and performing arts and media. The provision was unsatisfactory in hairdressing and beauty therapy, humanities, and English, languages and communications. PAL's leadership and management were unsatisfactory. Its approach to equality of opportunity was satisfactory, but its arrangements for quality assurance were very weak. At the end of the reinspection process, all areas were judged to be satisfactory or better.

GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	5

Business administration, management & professional	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

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

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

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4

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

Humanities	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4

English, languages & communications	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4

Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

Family learning	1
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	1

Grades awarded at reinspection

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	3

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

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

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

English, languages & communications	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

Family learning	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

13. **Retention and achievement rates are very good in ICT, foundation and family learning. In all other areas of learning they are good.**

14. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory in all areas of learning. **In ICT attendance is good.**

15. **Standards of work are particularly good in sport courses, holistic therapies, and in English, languages, and communications.**

Quality of education and training

16. **The standard of teaching and learning overall is good.** This is particularly so in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, visual and performing arts and media, foundation and family learning.

17. Staff are appropriately qualified and suitably experienced in all areas of learning. **In hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, many members of staff's qualifications exceed the level required and some staff have professional backgrounds.**

18. Resources are satisfactory. PAL has suitable accommodation and a good range of teaching and learning resources. **However, the courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy are taking place in accommodation which is noisy and cramped.**

19. **Initial assessment does not take place systematically in all areas of learning.** In some areas it is thorough and additional learning needs are identified and met. In other areas, some learning needs are not identified, or are identified too late for help to be provided.

20. Assessment is being introduced to all areas of learning. The personal development records are being completed to varying extents throughout the areas of learning, but this practice was not fully established at the time of the reinspection.

21. **Courses are matched with individual and community needs and in general there is a good range of provision. The range of provision in hospitality, leisure, sports and travel is very narrow** and some key courses are not provided. Progression is generally possible in most areas.

22. The provision is good at meeting the needs of particular learner groups. **Keep-fit courses are provided especially for elderly people and people with medical conditions.** Ballroom dancing is available for visually impaired people.

23. Information, advice and guidance has improved since the previous inspection, although there have been some complaints from learners about course information. Many taster days are held to promote courses.

24. Relationships with business partners are good. PAL has a good record of meeting the needs of employers and learners. In particular, meeting the literacy and numeracy needs of some larger companies.

Leadership and management

25. **Strategic management is clearly focused** through use of the three-year plan and the post-inspection development plan. Communications are good at all levels, and all staff understand the core aims and objectives of the organisation.

26. **Partnership arrangements remain strong and effective** as identified at the previous inspection. Further growth has been deliberately restricted to allow objectives to be met and to create progression opportunities for existing learners.

27. **Tutors are well supported** by a detailed staff appraisal system which is now applied each year and leads to the identification of development needs. These are provided for mainly by in-house courses. Meetings are well structured and all minutes are available to staff electronically.

28. **The management information system is very good.** It has been developed over the past year and all staff can generate reports on all aspects of the provision, including retention and achievement rates. Trends over years and within year can be identified.

29. **The strategies to widen participation which were introduced before the previous inspection have now become well established.** The proportion of learners with disabilities and from minority ethnic groups has increased.

30. **The support for learners with disabilities is particularly good.** PAL has close working relationships with local support services. Many vulnerable learners are supported by volunteers. Specialist equipment and adaptive technology is plentiful and readily available.

31. Support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs is satisfactory overall, but there are weaknesses in some areas of learning.

32. **Improvements in quality assurance have been considered carefully.** Those improvements which directly affect teaching and learning have been prioritised. Improvements have focused on areas where changes can be implemented effectively and swiftly.

33. **The monitoring of development plans is particularly effective.** The plan is detailed with clearly specified outcomes which are timebound and include milestones. These are reviewed every two months and the plan is updated.

34. **Quality assurance procedures are not established sufficiently.** Very good progress has been made in implementing many aspects of quality improvement, but there has not been sufficient time to evaluate the effect of these measures on the provision.

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clearly focused strategic management
- strong and effective partnership arrangements
- good support for tutors
- good use of management information
- well-established strategies to widen participation
- particularly good support for learners with disabilities
- clear priorities for quality improvements
- particularly effective monitoring of development plans

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established quality assurance procedures

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- very good retention and achievement rates
- good attendance rate
- good support for learning
- good range of provision to widen participation
- good progress in improving quality assurance

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' progress in flexible learning
- incomplete initial assessment process

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Strengths

- good retention rates
- very good development of skills
- good standards of teaching and learning
- good provision for learners with particular health needs
- particularly well-qualified staff

Weaknesses

- inadequate monitoring and recording of learners' progress in sport and leisure
- insufficient range of provision
- insufficient use of available support by sport and leisure tutors

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Strengths

- good achievement on accredited courses
- good standard of work in holistic therapies
- good support for learners
- good support for tutors

Weaknesses

- insufficient clients to develop learners' skills
- inadequate accommodation for some courses

Visual & performing arts & media

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good standards of teaching and learning
- good strategies to widen participation

Weaknesses

- incomplete initial assessment process
- insufficiently focused feedback to learners
- insufficiently self-critical course reviews

English, languages & communications

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates particularly on non-accredited courses
- good attainment of speaking and listening skills
- effective use of the target language
- good support for part-time tutors

Weaknesses

- insufficiently varied teaching methods in most sessions
- insufficient support for individual learners
- insufficiently established quality assurance initiatives

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- very good retention and achievement rates
- very good standards of teaching and learning
- good leadership and management of the curriculum area

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established use of individual learning plans

Family learning

Strengths

- very good retention and achievement rates
- good opportunities to gain accreditation
- good standards of teaching and learning
- wide range of programmes to attract new learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment, monitoring and recording of learners' progress

Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

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

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

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

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

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

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT   Grade 2

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- clearly focused strategic management
- strong and effective partnership arrangements
- good support for tutors
- good use of management information
- well-established strategies to widen participation
- particularly good support for learners with disabilities
- clear priorities for quality improvements
- particularly effective monitoring of development plans

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established quality assurance procedures

35. Strategic management is clearly focused. The adult learning manager now manages two curriculum managers, a quality improvement manager and a business and communications manager. They in turn manage nine programmes managers who, together with six customer services officers, assure the adult learning provision. Communications are good within the organisation at all levels. Frequent formal meetings take place which have standardised agendas, and detailed minutes with action points which are monitored to completion. Informal communications are good, and tutors are well informed about the broader aims of PAL as well as their own areas of learning. Strategies and policies are clearly stated with realistic aims and objectives. These are regularly reviewed and updated. The authority has a commitment to, and a good understanding of, adult learning.

36. Management in the areas of learning has improved a great deal since the previous inspection, where it was judged to be a weakness. A curriculum planning day began a major review of courses and areas of learning management. The programme managers have clearly defined responsibilities and are supported by the curriculum managers and the very efficient management information system. Programmes having poor retention and achievement rates are identified and action is taken where possible to improve performance.

37. Partnership arrangements continue to be strong and effective, as found in the previous inspection. These partnerships involve good collaborative links with external partners to ensure that the provision meets the needs of learners and the local

community. The links are extensive and include community schools, social services, voluntary sector organisations, libraries and museums. The community learning officers continue to promote adult learning in priority wards and the number of established literacy and numeracy training programmes continues to increase. The management of literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory. The number of learners established through links with other providers and local businesses has been maintained. A deliberate policy has been adopted to consolidate the provision rather than to expand it. The quality of provision has been maintained and existing learners have progression opportunities. PAL provides very effective accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities. The organisation responds to employers' training needs, in particular by providing language and business courses.

38. PAL's staff are well supported. Detailed, structured employee development interviews are now carried out annually. Training needs are identified and met within the authority. Training covers health and safety, diversity, and programme needs such as the development of personal learning records and initial assessment. Communications and meeting structures are good. Minutes from meetings are available electronically to all staff. Curriculum managers meet with their staff on a daily basis and staff feel valued. Staff may receive incentive bonuses if retention and achievement targets are exceeded.

39. The management information system is very good and is used well to manage the provision in most areas. The system was judged a weakness at the previous inspection. The management information system procedures have been developed since the previous inspection by the data and finance manager, who has also taken responsibility for data since the restructure. Much effort has been put into developing a new database which is very comprehensive. Data can be retrieved on demand by all staff. Retention and achievement data can be accessed easily and trends can be reviewed over years and within specific years. Data is checked and missing data from course administration can be identified quickly. PAL now monitors the participation and progress of diverse groups.

40. The slow implementation and monitoring of planned improvements was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection. This area is now much improved. The post-inspection quality improvement plan is reviewed every two months. The plan shows that the improvements have been carefully researched and, typically, are being progressed ahead of schedule.

41. At the time of the previous inspection, PAL provided courses at AS level in psychology, archaeology and psychology at GCSE level. This provision was judged to be unsatisfactory. The range of courses offered in this area has been increased, and the provision is satisfactory.

42. Standards of teaching and learning are now satisfactory or better in humanities, which is an improvement from the previous inspection. Inspectors observed five lessons, none of which were unsatisfactory. Teaching and assessment in archaeology has improved, as has lesson planning.

43. Achievement recorded in humanities for the first term of 2004-05 show good achievement

levels at 100 per cent for further education courses and 87.5 per cent for adult and community learning, maintaining the standards identified at the previous inspection. Retention on further education courses in humanities is poor at 50 per cent. However, attendance is now monitored through a link course administrator and retention has improved markedly on many courses. The area of learning has a part-time programme manager who has improved curriculum management which was a weakness at the previous inspection. Communication with tutors, all of whom are part time, has greatly improved since the previous inspection.

44. At the time of the previous inspection PAL provided courses in teacher training and business studies which were satisfactory. These courses remain satisfactory. The number and range of business courses have trebled in the past year and now account for 50 per cent of the provision. Significant quality improvements have taken place since the previous inspection when quality assurance was a major concern. There is insufficient continuity in the management of this area. A part-time temporary programme manager is currently in post.

45. Retention and achievement rates on the teaching courses remain very good. The retention and achievement rates on business courses are improving and the retention rate overall on accredited courses is good. Standards of teaching and learning have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Inspectors observed six lessons, none of which were unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned and clearly linked to the assessment criteria and this was a strength at the previous inspection. Some classes do not provide sufficient opportunities for learners with mixed abilities to learn at their own pace. IT is not used sufficiently on teacher training courses. On some business courses, learners have experienced problems with computers. Some of their tests have been disrupted. Initial assessments are still not used effectively in personal learning records. This was a weakness at the previous inspection. Some tutors are unclear about the purpose of the new personal learning records and there is no assurance that identified learner support needs will be met.

Equality of opportunity   Contributory grade 2

46. The authority has comprehensive and up-to-date policies and procedures for managing equality of opportunity. These are reviewed annually. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good, and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities are given high profiles on promotional literature.

47. PAL's initiatives to attract new learners were identified as a strength at the previous inspection, and they are now well established. PAL has made good use of its improved management information system to plan how it will attract previously excluded or under-represented groups of learners. At the previous inspection, managers made insufficient use of data analysis to compare success rates for different groups. PAL now routinely collects and analyses recruitment, retention and achievement rates by gender, ethnic background and disability. It uses this information to identify curriculum areas that are particularly successful at widening participation and to set targets for those that are not. PAL has developed a particularly successful strategy to encourage learners with

disabilities to take up learning opportunities. The strategy uses local intelligence well to identify potential learners and to set targets for growth. Since 2003-04, the number of learners with disabilities has grown from 562, representing 11.6 per cent of the total number of learners, to 651, or 12.5 per cent currently.

48. Over the same period, PAL has also continued to increase the number of learners from minority ethnic communities, from 2.8 per cent in 2003-04 to the present figure of 3.7 per cent. Links have been strengthened with a wide range of organisations such as secondary schools by working with pupils at risk of exclusion, local employers, the local further education college, and other departments in the authority. The number of sessions offered has grown from 727 to 902. One particularly successful project has recruited nearly 250 learners from an area of the town with no previous record of involvement in lifelong learning, exceeding LSC targets for the project. Many of these new learners are already enrolled on progression courses for September. Pre-course information and guidance is generally satisfactory, but a few learners have found course descriptions misleading, and not all were aware that their courses were designed to lead to externally accredited qualifications.

49. Support for learners was a strength at the previous inspection, and it is now particularly good for learners with identified disabilities or health concerns. Liaison between PAL and a wide range of national organisation support services, the social services department, residential homes, healthcare professionals and mental health services effectively identifies potential new learners and their support needs. Some link organisations provide personal or social support for learners. A particularly successful scheme links vulnerable new learners on arts courses with volunteers, to help them build their confidence. Some learners are taking fitness courses to help reduce stress, as an alternative to medical intervention. Specialist equipment and adaptive technology is plentiful and readily available. Some courses are provided to meet specific needs, such as an IT class for a group of learners with hearing impairments in which sign language interpreters work well with the tutor.

50. Staff have benefited from a good range of training events, in particular for equality and diversity issues. Most tutors now have a good understanding of equal opportunities, and some have adapted their teaching styles or learning resources to accommodate learners with a range of disabilities. Some managers and tutors use specialist software to produce guidance notes and survey forms using symbols. However, a few tutors have not attended these training events and some do not routinely review their resources or teaching styles to ensure that they meet the needs of all the learners.

51. Support for literacy, numeracy and language needs is satisfactory overall, although there are weaknesses in some areas of learning.

52. PAL has a satisfactory race equality scheme. The 2003 version is currently being revised, and a draft of the new version is about to be presented to the authority for approval. The provider has established an effective formal complaints procedure since the previous inspection. This is audited regularly and all learners are aware of the procedure.

Quality assurance   **Contributory grade 3**

53. PAL demonstrates a thoughtful and well-planned approach to rectifying inadequate and incomplete quality assurance arrangements. Such arrangements were judged weak at the previous inspection. A policy now exists to implement quality improvements. This complements the new organisational structure, their own quality cycle and reflects the culture and standards that PAL aims to promote. Improvements have focused on those areas that directly affect teaching and learning and where change can be implemented most effectively and quickly.

54. Curriculum management has improved a great deal since the previous inspection. The main focus of improvements has been to fully establish the teaching and learning observation cycle. This includes the systematic moderation of grades and the follow-up of recommendations for development given to tutors. The arrangements to review and evaluate courses have also been revised. These arrangements were a weakness at the previous inspection. Learners' feedback is collected at regular points throughout the programme, the information is collated centrally and all required actions are followed up systematically and resolved effectively. The production of regular, focused, in-house data reports, in many instances sorted by area of learning, help managers to monitor progress on course action plans and overall development plans.

55. Communications with tutors have been greatly improved since the previous inspection and all staff are aware of the quality assurance processes now in place. Regular tutor network meetings are held throughout all areas of learning and staff are paid to attend. Information is passed on through bulletins and good practice is shared throughout the areas of learning at whole-service staff meetings. Five quality improvement workshops were held at the beginning of the academic year for all staff, to agree the key quality processes and how these were to be managed over the year. This was followed by the introduction of a two-part quality assurance toolkit, which forms the core of the tutor handbook. This has been very well received by tutors, who view it as a calendar of quality assurance activities for the academic year.

56. The monitoring of progress on actions related to the annual development plan is particularly effective. Regular reports are produced on all actions outstanding and comprehensive data reports are used to quantify progress. Realistic, achievable target dates and milestones are set and progress on meeting targets is reviewed at management meetings. The reports are also shared with curriculum managers, programme managers and tutors on a regular basis, through tutor networks and staff meetings.

57. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. PAL has established a more consultative, evaluative and quantitative self-assessment process in place since the previous inspection. This builds on the quality improvement arrangements established over the past year. PAL has undergone self-assessment twice over the past 12 months. It has extended the range of information on which to base its judgements and now involves curriculum managers, business managers, programme co-ordinators and tutors more

directly in the assessment of the areas of learning. The most recent self-assessment report update is more judgmental and matched many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. However, contributory grades were not awarded for equality of opportunity and quality assurance.

58. Quality assurance procedures are not established sufficiently. Many of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection have been fully resolved. For example, the unsatisfactory internal verification identified in hairdressing has been subcontracted to an external internal verifier. However, some initiatives are still not fully implemented. Initial assessment is inadequate in some areas of learning and the results are not always used to improve the teaching and learning process. A small number of tutors do not attend training events, staff meetings and network meetings. Routine observations of teaching and learning are now fully integrated with organisational procedures, and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has dropped from 12 per cent at the previous inspection to 4 per cent recently. However, some tutors are still not taking up training recommendations and some observation of feedback is not adequate. The collection of feedback from learners is well established, but has not achieved an acceptable response rate. Revised end-of-course reviews are now being implemented in all areas of learning. Some tutors do not yet understand the process by which the reviews contribute to the self-assessment process.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology   Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	229	2

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- very good retention and achievement rates
- good attendance rate
- good support for learning
- good range of provision to widen participation
- good progress in improving quality assurance

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' progress in flexible learning
- incomplete initial assessment process

Achievement and standards

59. Achievement and retention rates were very good at the previous inspection. Progress has been made so far this year in the first and second terms. The rates have improved and are over 98 per cent in both cases. Attendance, at 97 per cent, and punctuality were also very good during reinspection. This situation was acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

60. Attainment in class is satisfactory. Learners make good progress towards their learning goals. Learners on beginners' courses acquire good skills and confidence and are proud of their achievements. The standard of work in lessons and in learners' portfolios is good. Many learners progress to higher level courses.

Quality of education and training

61. Support for learning is good. At the start of each lesson, tutors ensure that learners are aware of the skills they will be developing. Learners acquire good computer skills in class. Data projectors are used frequently and effectively for demonstrations to whole groups. Lesson plans are now in a standard format, which ensure that tutors include strategies for a variety of learners. In one class, a group of learners with hearing impairments were supported well by the tutor and sign language interpreters. Since the previous inspection, a system of personal learning records has been implemented for all

learners. They all receive a useful induction, with good coverage of safe working practices when using computers. All receive a learner's handbook. Equality of opportunity is covered and is recognised in most lessons in terms of learners' needs being met. Tutors and learners use these documents well to review learning at regular intervals. Learners use and appreciate the system as the feedback given to them is supportive and designed to build their confidence, advising them how to make improvements. Some learners who enrol having no knowledge of computers achieve sound, basic word processing skills. However on one taster session, new learners, who had not used a mouse or keyboard, logged on to the network as their first computer experience and encountered problems.

62. A wide range of courses is available, from entry level to level 3, augmented by flexible learning opportunities and tasters. Flexible learning is popular with learners who cannot attend timetabled classes or for those who prefer individual support. Portfolio-based courses have proved popular with learners who do not wish to take examinations. Learners are well aware of progression opportunities when they complete their courses. Most learners are very satisfied with their courses and the surveys show this clearly. Many learners have returned to education after substantial periods of time. They value their new learning opportunities and are keen to continue. Many courses are for learners with no previous experience of computers, who gain confidence in using computers at an elementary level.

63. Generally, computer equipment is satisfactory. Computer rooms have interesting displays of course information and learners' work. PAL has a good range of assistive technology available for physically disabled learners, and all tutors have been trained in its use. Some equipment is not the same as that used by learners at home. One learner wanted to use a memory stick, but the operating system on the computers in his class would not support it. However, there are plans to upgrade these computers very soon.

64. In the flexible learning centre, learners work individually on their own programmes and the very brief tutor records are not accessible by learners. No system exists to record or review learners' weekly progress or provide evidence of earlier learning.

65. Initial assessments have improved, but remain incomplete. This weakness was not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The assessments are designed by individual tutors to suit their learners, as they were at the previous inspection. Some learners complete a simple self-assessment of their IT skills at the beginning of the course, but none have their literacy and numeracy support needs routinely assessed unless the learner declares a need. The effectiveness of initial assessments varies and few of them are used to contribute to learners' records or lesson plans. In one class, the learner's progress was clearly inhibited by being on an inappropriate course. A few of the IT staff have qualifications in literacy and numeracy and others plan to attend PAL's fast-track courses.

Leadership and management

66. Since the previous inspection, there has been a change in the management structure and improvements in curriculum management are evident.

67. Quality assurance was poor at the previous inspection, but PAL has made good progress in making improvements. Teaching staff are now more involved in the self-assessment process through their course reviews and the regular monitoring of the development plan. All tutors have been observed at least once since the previous inspection under the new observation of teaching and learning system. These observations are moderated by group discussions and have realistic judgements and grades. However, the action plans are weak or non-existent, especially for lessons graded as satisfactory.

68. Part-time tutors now have the opportunity to meet and share good practice and materials through the IT tutor network meetings. PAL pays tutors to attend these events. Since the previous inspection, all staff have received staff development which has been identified in their development interviews. Teaching staff have suitable expertise in IT and have achieved, or are working towards, a teaching qualification. Surveys of learners' views are conducted at the end of all courses and mid-way through courses of 10 weeks or more. These are analysed and issues are considered and resolved. For example, one group of learners was unsure about the learning support on offer, and the tutor provided leaflets and discussed this with the class.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel   Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	367	2

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- good retention rates
- very good development of skills
- good standards of teaching and learning
- good provision for learners with particular health needs
- particularly well-qualified staff

Weaknesses

- inadequate monitoring and recording of learners' progress in sport and leisure
- insufficient range of provision
- insufficient use of available support by sport and leisure tutors

Achievement and standards

69. Retention on adult and community learning and further education programmes is good. This was acknowledged in the self-assessment report and identified as a strength in the previous inspection. Improvements have continued since the previous inspection. For example, retention rates in 2003-04 were 98 per cent for further education programmes and have improved to 100 per cent. Adult and community learning retention rates were 89 per cent in 2003-04 and have improved to 98 per cent.

70. Learners' skill development is very good. In yoga classes, learners perform postures well and show good breathing control and the ability to manage tension and stress. The performance of exercise to music by learners, some of whom are well over 60 years of age, is good. Movements are well timed to the rhythm and tempo of the music. Levels of co-ordination and balance are good. Learners in pilates classes show good levels of strength and muscular endurance and good development of kinaesthetic awareness.

71. In hospitality, learners develop good knife skills, learn to use small equipment and carry out a wide range of preparation and cooking methods. Learners prepare and cook new and unusual dishes to agreed timescales. They are knowledgeable about safe working procedures and hygiene practices in kitchens.

72. Learners in sport classes report that exercise has helped them considerably in the alleviation of injuries and minor health problems. Learners in a number of yoga, pilates

and exercise classes reported that ailments such as back and neck injuries have been improved as a result of participation in the classes.

73. Achievement on accredited courses is satisfactory. Attendance at the time of inspection was satisfactory, at 68 per cent.

Quality of education and training

74. Standards of teaching and learning are good overall. These were identified as strengths at the previous inspection and in the self-assessment report. In sport, classes included good correction of poor techniques and detailed explanations of links to better health. Classes are well managed and routinely include strengthening, aerobic conditioning and stretching exercises. Good individual and differentiated guidance engages and motivates learners. Learners with particular needs are often advised of alternatives. Teachers provide good demonstrations to give learners an accurate impression of how to perform movements. Activities such as step sequences in exercise to music are presented effectively to help with performance and understanding. In the weaker sports and leisure classes, teachers do not accommodate the individual needs and abilities of learners sufficiently. Correction of techniques is often too late to be effective and teachers spend too much time doing the activity rather than advising learners.

75. In hospitality, tutors give learners technical information about nutrition and health and safety. They explain the reasons for using piping bags and the use of pressure in piping icing. Lessons are motivational, fun, and very sociable. Demonstrations in cooking and sugarcraft lessons are good, with clear explanations and tips to improve techniques. Learners receive good individual support.

76. The provision is very good for those learners with particular health needs. These classes are attended by elderly learners. Many of them live alone and the classes help their ability to lead active lives. Many learners with long-term chronic illnesses such as back and neck injuries, those awaiting hip replacements and those with myalgic encephalitis, describe the alleviation of health problems as a feature of these classes.

77. Pre-course information and enrolment procedures, which were identified as weaknesses in the previous inspection, are now satisfactory. All courses now have information sheets that give details of the level of the course and whether it is accredited. Course content and outcomes are stated clearly.

78. The monitoring and assessment of progress in sport and leisure is inadequate. This was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection. A new system for recording and monitoring progress is not being used by all tutors. Some tutors have devised their own system for monitoring and assessing progress. When the new system is used, many of the forms are incomplete. Progress reviews do not focus sufficiently on the learning outcomes identified in lessons and individual learning outcomes are not always identified.

79. The range of provision is inadequate. Most of the provision consists of yoga and pilates, with some hospitality and leisure classes. There are very few men in the classes. There are no classes in European cookery and no Asian cookery. Only a few classes are available for those learners who may wish to acquire new skills as a result of changed circumstances.

Leadership and management

80. Staff are particularly well qualified. This was identified as a strength at the previous inspection. All staff are occupationally competent to teach their subject. Many have teaching qualifications and some are qualified to masters degree level. Some have worked professionally in the subject they teach. A number of staff have extended their qualifications. For example, some tutors have become qualified to teach yoga to pregnant women and others to offer exercise prescription. Another tutor, who is a qualified medic, has advanced practitioner status and is qualified to deliver exercise programmes to those who are elderly and with chronic illnesses.

81. Curriculum management was identified as a weakness in the previous inspection. It is now satisfactory. The availability and use of management information is good. Tutors have comprehensive written instructions and there are detailed risk assessments of activities and venues. The tutor observation programme is satisfactory. Most staff have been observed, but lesson grades do not always reflect the written commentary. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory, and there are classes for groups with particular needs, and the elderly and the chronically ill. Participation by men and those from minority ethnic groups is low. The self-assessment report is satisfactory. It identifies many of the strengths and weaknesses found during the inspection. A number of the targets in the development plan are over-optimistic and have not been met.

82. The strategy for curriculum development is satisfactory. PAL has made an effective response to the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report. A curriculum planning day has taken place recently, and targets for enrolment and participation by men have been set. Procedures now exist to evaluate the provision.

83. Accommodation is satisfactory. Some rooms and halls are of a good standard with sufficient space, light and heating to be good venues for classes. Hospitality classrooms have sufficient cooking and preparation equipment. Some rooms are too small for the numbers of learners enrolled on the register.

84. Sport tutors have not responded sufficiently to the support offered by PAL. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. PAL has implemented a new programme of meetings to improve communications with staff. Attendance at these meetings by sport and leisure tutors has been poor. Seven of the 19 tutors in sport have not attended any network meetings. Only one such tutor has attended all meetings.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy   Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	230	3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- good achievement on accredited courses
- good standard of work in holistic therapies
- good support for learners
- good support for tutors

Weaknesses

- insufficient clients to develop learners' skills
- inadequate accommodation for some courses

Achievement and standards

85. Retention and achievement rates on most accredited courses are good. The achievement rate has improved significantly and since the previous inspection has increased by 35 per cent. The achievement rate for the theory mandatory units is very good at 98 per cent for the period 2003-04. Punctuality and attendance have improved markedly since the previous inspection. During the inspection, attendance was 81 per cent. Achievement of theory units in holistic therapies is good. The standard of theory work in beauty therapy is satisfactory. Learners achieved a 65 per cent pass rate in a mandatory class unit test after three weeks on the course. Commercial standards in further education lessons are satisfactory and improving steadily. This area was identified as a weakness in the previous inspection. Learners are consulting with clients to provide a professional service. Spot checks to improve commercial standards are successful. Learners arrive punctually and classes start on time. This is an improvement on the behaviour noted at the previous inspection.

86. The standard of work in holistic therapies is good. This was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Learners gain very good practical skills and are confident in their massage techniques which are designed to meet industry standards. The learners are appropriately dressed and project a professional image. A good range of case studies extends the learners' knowledge. These studies are completed in their own time and are well written.

Quality of education and training

87. Support for learners is good and was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Good initial screening is supplied by the industry lead body and identifies literacy and numeracy needs. Tutors identify learners' initial support needs in literacy and numeracy and refer learners to the Basic Skills Support Unit. PAL provides individual support and in-class support is provided to vulnerable learners. Seven learners in hairdressing have achieved vocational units at level 2 with additional support. Tutors provide good pastoral support and are well aware of learners' needs. Initial advice and guidance is now satisfactory and there has been significant improvement in the retention of learners. The proportion of learners leaving the course before completing has reduced from 22 per cent to 8 per cent in the last year. Most learners are now placed on appropriate courses.

88. Some learners in hairdressing begin with taster courses, then progress through beginners' courses to the intermediate level. Learners work at a good pace in the salon, and gain good experience of highlighting techniques and client consultations. Learners demonstrate satisfactory practical skills in hairdressing. They improve their applications of foil highlights, and cutting skills. Recently developed client consultation sheets are used effectively to develop interaction with the client and to meet PAL's requirements. Equipment is sterilised and learners follow the correct procedures for dropped equipment.

89. The quality of teaching and learning is improving in this area. The percentage of teaching judged to be satisfactory or better is now 80 per cent, compared with 50 per cent at the previous inspection. Good schemes of work and lesson plans are used effectively in all classes to identify aims and objectives. Differentiated learning needs are still not recorded sufficiently in some classes. Coloured paper with clear printing is used effectively to assist dyslexic learners.

90. Assessment practice was poor at the previous inspection, but is now satisfactory. Procedures exist for assessment and verification, and assessment plans are used effectively. Good use of standardised documents ensures that standards are consistent among all tutors and assessors. Constructive feedback is given throughout the course, including the use of personal learning records. Good notes show actions for tutors and dates for completion. Tutors and assessors use monitoring documents which accurately record the outcomes of assessment, and unit completions. Four assessors are still working towards the assessment qualification in holistic and beauty therapy. Two contracted internal verifiers and one of PAL's tutor monitor the assessment process. Previously, assessment practice was identified as a weakness. The awarding body is monitoring the situation and PAL has made progress this year.

91. Continuing good support is provided to widen participation through neighbourhood learning projects. This provision is delivered in Canford Heath library. 'Fifty-plus' learners have joined the courses in beauty therapy. At the Oakdale Centre, two learners receive support with transport, seven learners are receiving support for childcare. One hundred

learners have been able to join the provision by receiving access funding for fees and materials. Introduction to hairdressing by way of the taster courses is good.

92. Learners' skills are being developed, but there are insufficient suitable clients. Learners sometimes have to practise on themselves and they do not have access to the full range of client types. Learners bring in friends and family and often work on each other. The available teaching time is reduced. The appointment pages show few bookings for several weeks before the reinspection.

93. The accommodation for some courses is inadequate. The hair and beauty salons are far too small to accommodate the number of learners, plus the minimum amount of large equipment such as facial steamers and manicure stations with ventilation. The total number of learners in this area has increased. In massage classes, there is not enough space for the seven couches needed for a full class. Hospital-style screens are a hazard in cramped conditions. In adult and community learning, body massage is carried out on dirty floor, there is not enough privacy for clients to undress and learners must provide their own towels. Shower facilities are not available for those body massage clients who have been using oil in their sessions.

Leadership and management

94. At the previous inspection, curriculum management was poor. A new post of curriculum manager has been created and there is now a part-time programme manager. The curriculum management is improving and standard procedures for managing the area are being established.

95. Support for tutors is good. They benefit from more regular team meetings and termly network meetings. Teamwork and staff communications have increased. Tutors are beginning to share good practice. The improved management information system provides more accurate data, but this is not used by curriculum staff to set targets.

96. Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant improvement in quality assurance arrangements. Observation of teaching and learning has also improved. Feedback about teaching and learning is good and tutors' training needs are identified well. Additional support is provided appropriately. This is followed by development interviews. Seventy-five per cent of tutors have been observed and 69 per cent have had development interviews. The grading profile has improved, with 80 per cent of lessons satisfactory or above. This is an improvement of 35 per cent on the previous inspection. All staff appraisals have been completed.

97. Tutors are provided with more teaching resources and consumables in further education practical sessions. Improvements in professional practice are maintained by regular spot checks.

98. The self-assessment report identifies many of the strengths and weakness found by inspectors. Not all staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process, but they have

the opportunity to contribute course reviews which are used in the action plans for improvement.

Visual & performing arts & media   Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	579	3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good standards of teaching and learning
- good strategies to widen participation

Weaknesses

- incomplete initial assessment process
- insufficiently focused feedback to learners
- insufficiently self-critical course reviews

Achievement and standards

99. Retention rates are consistently good at 91 per cent on accredited courses, and 89 per cent on non-accredited courses. Achievement rates are good on accredited courses at 82 per cent, an improvement from the previous year. This strength was acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

100. In non-accredited learning, achievements on most courses are measured by the successful completion of course-related learning objectives. Learners develop good technical skills in art and craft classes. Beginners learn basic techniques quickly, and apply them to their work with confidence. For example, in a short beginners' watercolour class, learners were using techniques such as layered washes, wax resists, stippling, colour mixing and wet on wet, which they applied to a range of subject paintings. Returning learners make good progress in building on their skills and are suitably challenged by tutors. Many learners progress from beginners' to improvers' classes. Progression is particularly good in accredited photography classes where 21 per cent of learners progressed from level 1 to level 2 classes and 57 per cent progressed to level 3 classes during 2003-04. Learners are encouraged to develop their ideas and practical art and craft skills through their own projects. Good examples of learners' art, craft and photography work are displayed around the PAL centre and in the local library.

Quality of education and training

101. Standards of teaching and learning are good and were identified as strengths in the self-assessment report. In the better lessons, tutors share the objectives with learners and support this with clear demonstrations of practical skills. Learners demonstrate good technical skills in art and craft courses. They develop a diverse range of specialist, creative skills and work on complex and challenging tasks. These skill levels are acquired through effective whole-class teaching and individual projects. In a soft furnishing class, learners confidently carried out pinch pleating after a very professional demonstration by the tutor and produced a high standard of curtain pleats.

102. Learners can select what they make from a wide choice of items and are supported by confident and knowledgeable teachers. Tutors have a wealth of experience in this area and often practise the skills they teach through their own art and craft work. Learners identify the development of new skills to a professional level, and gaining qualifications, as their most important aims. Many classes contain learners with different skill levels and tutors are able to support and challenge each learner successfully through imaginative questioning. Attendance and punctuality are good. Lesson planning is satisfactory, although some plans focus too heavily on the end product rather than what is to be learnt through the process. In less successful lessons, learning is not checked sufficiently and there are few opportunities for learners to demonstrate what they have learnt.

103. Additional support for learners in class is good. For example, a tutor-linked hearing loop and a BSL signer are used to support a therapeutic art class for hearing-impaired learners. In a ballroom dancing class, visually impaired learners are learning particular dances such as the Viennese swing, barn dances and the waltz. Some of the learners have very limited vision, but, working closely with support staff and their partners, they are able to move around the dance floor independently, and with great confidence.

104. A successful linking scheme trains volunteers to work in pairs with disabled and vulnerable learners to support their successful inclusion in lessons. Volunteers are able to promote personal skills, support the anxieties of learners and encourage self-esteem and confidence.

105. Resources are satisfactory. Learners make effective use of a range of specialist art and craft equipment and materials. PAL has a photographic darkroom and a well-equipped computer room using industry-standard software. Art rooms are well lit, spacious and contain examples of learners' work. Large, clean tables in a soft furnishing class allow bolts of cloth to be laid out for cutting. Some teaching rooms are cramped and others are not fit for purpose. There is insufficient storage space for fired pottery work and clay storage, and restricted desk space in pottery classes. The classroom used for upholstery is cramped and the desks used to support furniture are not appropriate for some of the work carried out on them.

106. Initial assessment is not well developed. This situation was identified as a weakness

in the self-assessment report. Since the previous inspection, PAL has incorporated the initial assessment and its outcome into the personal learner record, but the process is not used consistently by tutors. Most learners self-assess their requirements. The information that is generated through this form of initial assessment does allow the setting of individual learning targets, nor is it reflected in lesson planning. There is no systematic assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills and no literacy and numeracy skills support is offered. No risk assessments are carried out for individual learners. Tutors have insufficient knowledge of the health and safety requirements of learners with specific needs in specialist learning environments.

Leadership and management

107. Strategies to widen participation are good. Enrolments on accredited courses rose from 221 learners during 2002-03, to 451 learners in 2003-04. Enrolments on non-accredited courses rose from 1,147 learners to 1,306 learners over the same period. Courses are generated by learner requests and are developed to meet local needs. A good range of specialist courses is offered for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. The number of learners on these courses has increased over three years from 81 to 185. Projects such as those at Hamworthy library community learning centre and Canford Heath library provide taster courses to encourage learners from traditionally hard-to-reach groups and deprived wards back into learning. The authority works with local employers to deliver art courses. For example, watercolour classes are taught at a local bank to a group of employees. PAL offers several weekend 'taster' workshops to engage new learners. A good range of beginners' courses in art and craft offer good opportunities for progression. Few opportunities have been created in performing arts other than ballroom dancing and guitar classes.

108. PAL has made significant improvements in quality assurance, which was judged to be a weakness at the previous inspection. Tutors' network meetings are an effective forum for sharing good practice and much appreciated by staff. Action points are agreed, minuted and distributed to all staff. Observations of teaching and learning are carried out on all tutors and provide them with clear feedback about how they can develop their professional skills. However, these issues are not always discussed effectively by managers at the employee development interviews that are carried out with most staff. The self-assessment report and improved management information system has improved significantly since the previous inspection and are providing clear and accurate data for course planning.

109. At the previous inspection, the monitoring of learners' progress was judged to be inadequate. The introduction of personal learner records has improved the monitoring of learners' progress significantly through quarterly reviews. There are, however, inconsistencies in the way they are completed and tutors consider them too bureaucratic.

110. Feedback to learners is not focused sufficiently and learners do not always understand how far they have progressed or what they have achieved. The records kept

by the tutors are not shared sufficiently with learners and records are not updated on progress made. Learning objectives are often recorded as the same for all learners in each class, despite variations in ability levels and starting points. There is no summative record of achievement in non-accredited learning.

111. Course reviews are not self-critical enough to contribute adequately to planning. They do not provide concise and evaluative judgements against specific criteria. The reviews do not assist course development productively and are not used to support the judgements made in the self-assessment report. Staff have not had sufficient training in order to complete the reviews effectively.

English, languages & communications   Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	326	3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates particularly on non-accredited courses
- good attainment of speaking and listening skills
- effective use of the target language
- good support for part-time tutors

Weaknesses

- insufficiently varied teaching methods in most sessions
- insufficient support for individual learners
- insufficiently established quality assurance initiatives

Achievement and standards

112. Retention and achievement rates are good. PAL has now transferred much of its adult and community learning provision to further education-funded provision. In 2003-04, retention on these courses was 83 per cent and achievements reached 71 per cent. On adult and community learning-funded courses, retention was 79 per cent and the achievement rate was 72 per cent. The further education-funded non-accredited courses completed in 2004-05 have a retention rate of 82 per cent and an achievement rate of 81 per cent. Adult and community learning courses completed in the same period have a retention rate of 94 per cent and an achievement rate of 94 per cent. The current retention rate on three-term accredited courses is 80 per cent.

113. Learners in foreign language classes demonstrate good attainment of speaking and listening skills. This was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Beginners speak with confidence and are able to hold simple conversations. On more advanced courses, learners speak fluently in the target language. In a basic Mandarin Chinese class, learners have acquired a good range of vocabulary. Communication in most foreign language classes is in the target language and learners generally understand the dialogue.

Quality of education and training

114. Since the previous inspection, considerable progress has been made in ensuring that the target language is used in language classes. Half the language tutors are native speakers and the others are competent language speakers. They provide good models of pronunciation for the learners. The target language is used to communicate throughout the classes and tutors feel that this has improved learning. In the better classes, mime, gestures, non-verbal communication and visual stimuli are used to aid comprehension.

115. Internal verification on the portfolio-based accredited courses is satisfactory. A comprehensive system of internal verification has been established and regular meetings take place for tutors on courses which are assessed by portfolio. The external moderator commented favourably on the standard of internal moderation.

116. The extent to which programmes meet the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. Learners interviewed during the inspection week and learner feedback surveys indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the provision. PAL extended several classes into a third term in response to learners' requests and also extended the time of a GCSE English class to meet learners' needs. There is an attempt to run progression classes at the same time and in the same venue to enable as many learners to continue as possible. Classes are provided in a number of community colleges, in a local library and in the offices of two local employers. However, demand is often established by asking existing learners and does not take sufficient account of the needs of potential learners. Some learners were concerned that the end of their course was near but they had not been made aware of the progression opportunities. Learners on level 2 accredited courses are concerned that there is no obvious progression route for them.

117. Guidance is satisfactory. Pre-course guidance sessions were offered for the first time this year. Although they were not well attended, they offered prospective learners a chance to find out more about courses. Course leaflets are clear and are generally written in language appropriate for the learners. Leaflets for accredited courses make accreditation requirements clear. Most learners have had an induction.

118. Most teaching involves a narrow range of teaching methods. Too much teaching consists of direct question and answer sessions directed through the tutor. Learners are not given the chance to develop their own responses. Although the curriculum area has invested in more up-to-date resources since the previous inspection, some lessons do not make sufficient use sessions of visual aids. Learners do not use IT in class, although some tutors refer learners to websites. In one lesson, an interactive whiteboard was used very successfully and PAL plans to train more tutors in its use.

119. PAL does not provide sufficient support for some individual learners. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. There is no consistent method of initial assessment and no routine screening for literacy, numeracy and language skills or for dyslexia. No learners receive support for dyslexia, although one learner was

offered support but subsequently left. PAL has a good system of link volunteers who attend lessons with learners with learning difficulties, but only two learners in this curriculum area have made use of this support. Most learners are aware of the possibility of support for learning, but few have used it. Tutors do not make use of technology to help hearing impaired learners in language classes. Personal learning records are not used effectively to record individual support needs.

Leadership and management

120. Support for part-time tutors is good. Curriculum management and communications between managers and teaching staff have improved since the previous inspection. A programme manager has been appointed with a clear and comprehensive job description. Regular tutor network meetings are well attended and are valued by tutors as a means of keeping in touch with each other and with current developments. Tutors are well supported and have been given resources whereas they previously supplied their own. The programme manager also acts as a point of contact for enquiries about courses. Regular meetings take place for staff teaching on Open College Network accredited courses.

121. A range of quality assurance initiatives has been established, including regular student feedback and course reviews, but these are not fully established. The quality of teaching and learning varies widely. Negative feedback from learners is recorded on a quality improvement form and action is taken. Nearly all staff have been observed teaching recently and most have also had an employer development interview with the programme manager. The self-assessment report identified weak curriculum management and insufficient use of the target language as weaknesses, and action has been taken to resolve these problems. The self-assessment report did not identify weaknesses in support for some learners or in the variety of teaching methods.

122. PAL's approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Most staff have attended equality and diversity training, either as part of initial training at induction, or on a dedicated training session. Learners are also given written information about equality of opportunity in the learner handbook and at induction.

123. Quality assurance initiatives are still not established well enough. Some staff and learners view quality assurance as unnecessary. Some completed courses have not yet submitted course reviews. Tutors are uncertain of their targets for retention and achievement. The results of learners' feedback are not fed back systematically to tutors. The action plans resulting from observations of teaching and learning are not fully monitored.

Foundation programmes   Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	528	2

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths
- very good retention and achievement rates
- very good standards of teaching and learning
- good leadership and management of the curriculum area

Weaknesses
- insufficiently established use of individual learning plans

Achievement and standards

124. Retention and achievement rates on foundation courses are very good. These were identified as strengths in the self-assessment report. Retention rates are over 90 per cent and the achievement rate is 90 per cent. This shows a slight but steady improvement over recent years and since the previous inspection. Most learners are working towards some form of accreditation, and in the current year 205 learners have successfully taken national tests in literacy and numeracy at entry level, level 1 and level 2. Learners make good progress against their personal learning goals and some have progressed from entry level to preparation for GCSE English over an 18-month period. Some learners progress to more advanced courses, including higher education courses and a number have enrolled on vocational courses at local further education colleges. Two learners, having successfully completed level 1 and 2 in literacy, have gained places to study construction at a local further education college. Attendance is satisfactory and good levels of punctuality have been maintained, as identified at the previous inspection.

125. Attainment is good in most classes. Students use their improving speaking and listening skills to engage more effectively with each other and with the tutor. One group of learners won a regional award as part of the 2005 adult learners week. A mature learner read from a piece she had written about the award ceremony. She spoke with emotion and humour about the experience and the achievements of the group.

126. There are many enthusiastic and well-motivated learners. They are quick to offer each other encouragement, celebrate each other's successes and achievements and to welcome new members into the class.

Quality of education and training

127. Standards of teaching and learning are very good, with 88 per cent of sessions graded as good or better. This is a slight improvement on the previous inspection. This strength was acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Some planning for individual classes is excellent, but overall, planning for sessions and activities varies in quality. Not all tutors include specific planning to ensure that activities are accessible to all learners or take account of the particular needs of individual learners. Tutors ensure that lessons progress at a good pace, with activities changing at appropriate intervals. Tutors are concerned to show learners respect. Tutors listen to learners' views, take full account of each learner's requirements and adjust course content to meet individual needs.

128. The recording of learners' achievements has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Learners are encouraged to record what they have learnt during each lesson and not simply the tasks and work completed. Some learners are very perceptive about what they are learning, but many of the less able learners find this a difficult task and have not been provided with strategies that will enable them to do this successfully.

129. PAL has been successful in enabling ESOL learners take more responsibility for their learning outside the taught sessions. A project involving learning through the use of mobile phones has been funded by a national body concerned with adult learning. PAL is able to communicate with learners by means of group texts. The texts provide information about homework and projects, as well as key dates and reminders about attendance. Feedback from learners about the value of this project is very positive.

130. A good range of courses is located in venues throughout the borough. Most courses focus directly on literacy, numeracy and ESOL, although some are delivered effectively through leisure programmes. One ESOL class is successfully attracting learners from the Chinese community who are improving their language skills through a flower-arranging course.

131. PAL makes excellent use of volunteer assistants who are used well to support learners and tutors. All volunteers are provided with training appropriate to their role and many have been encouraged to progress and have gained formal teaching qualifications.

132. Individual learning plans are not sufficiently established as working documents. They are used well to monitor the progress and achievements of each learner, but they are not used effectively to plan and set learning targets. Tutors do monitor and assess learners' progress regularly and provide them with satisfactory verbal and written feedback about the quality of their work.

Leadership and management

133. Recent restructuring of management arrangements has been well received. It is proving very effective in building on the strengths identified at the previous inspection and in resolving the two weaknesses identified. Curriculum managers promote a reflective management style that successfully encourages the sharing of good practice and professional dialogue.

134. The arrangements for the self-assessment review are thorough and the development plan that accompanies the self-assessment report has been linked directly to the post-inspection action plan and is reviewed on a monthly basis. Since the previous inspection, confidence in management information has improved and course reviews and action-planning have been strengthened. The judgements about strengths and weaknesses made in the most recent self-assessment report are similar to those made by inspectors during the reinspection.

135. Quality assurance procedures are good. PAL's monitoring of teaching and learning is regular and thorough, and contributes to the culture of continuous improvement. All staff are observed at least annually and this strategy has been effective in identifying unsatisfactory teaching and learning. PAL offers a high level of support to all staff and there is a significant commitment to continuing professional development.

136. Risk assessments are completed by PAL's staff, sometimes in collaboration with partner organisations, for all locations and courses. This strength was identified in the previous inspection and risk assessments continue to be conducted thoroughly and recorded. The assessments are reviewed regularly and updated.

137. PAL continues to maintain effective partnership arrangements with local community and business groups. These partnership arrangements were judged to be a strength in the previous inspection. Literacy and numeracy classes are offered in partnership with local organisations. A 'learning bus' has been established in collaboration with the local bus company and other key partners. The bus has been equipped to offer literacy through IT to bus drivers and has been particularly effective in providing literacy and language training for drivers for whom English is an additional language.

Family learning   Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	123	2

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths
- very good retention and achievement rates
- good opportunities to gain accreditation
- good standards of teaching and learning
- wide range of programmes to attract new learners

Weaknesses
- insufficient assessment, monitoring and recording of learners' progress

Achievement and standards

138. Retention and achievement rates are very good. An average achievement rate of 89 per cent has been reached for externally accredited courses. This was acknowledged as a strength in the self-assessment report. Overall, retention and achievement rates during 2003-04 increased from the previous year to 96 and 97 per cent, respectively. Achievement rates on numeracy courses are now consistently good. Learners develop the confidence to share their concerns about their educational backgrounds and skills. Parents learn effective strategies to engage their children in learning activities. In one observed class, learners brought in seashore collages, which they had made at home with their children after a trip to the local beach. This was the culmination of class work on observing the local environment. Parents commented enthusiastically about the fun they had had, developing art activities with their children at very little cost.

139. PAL creates good opportunities for learners to gain nationally recognised accreditation. Fifty-three learners have gained certificates in IT or numeracy during the period 2004-05. Forty-one learners have progressed from wider family learning courses to certificate courses. Learners recognise the importance of improving their own mathematical, literacy and computer skills to help their children. Tutors provide effective support, advice and guidance about taking the next steps in learning. Learners gain in confidence during courses and plan for their next learning experience.

Quality of education and training

140. Standards of teaching and learning are good and are identified as strengths in the self-assessment report. Seventy-seven per cent of the lessons observed were good or better. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. Tutors plan lessons in detail with clear aims and objectives. Tutors continue to work closely and effectively with the children's schoolteachers to meet the needs of parents and children. Parents develop their learning skills while developing strategies to support their own children's learning. In one observed session, learners enjoyed playing a year 6 game, identifying 2-D and 3-D shapes to learn the correct terminology before moving on to more complex work. Teaching is very supportive and encourages learners to apply their knowledge and skills, as well as to increase their confidence and self-esteem. In a visual arts workshop, parents and children worked together with a local artist to build their own family tree using boxes and cardboard from a local supermarket, and re-cycled wool, string and coloured tissue paper. Parents and children were delighted with the results which were achieved at very little expense. Parents value the crèche provision, which allows them time to focus on helping their school-aged children.

141. Learners receive good information and guidance about the range of courses available through schools, other partnership agencies and family learning promotional activities such as the visual arts workshops. Learners are fully informed about their own and other courses and the type of support available, such as crèche facilities and additional learning support. Volunteer tutors and trainee tutors often work alongside class tutors to give more individual help to less confident learners.

142. Resources are used effectively to improve the learning experience. In one introductory computer class, the tutor used an interactive whiteboard to demonstrate new applications. PAL has continued to update and increase its supply of resources. These are readily available to staff and learners. Tutors skilfully encourage learners to use books, games and artwork to give them a clear understanding of how they and their children learn. In the first lesson of a course, new learners were introduced to number lines, fraction cubes and multiplication squares. They were able to borrow mathematical games and counting storybooks from the resource loan box. The loan box of games, pictures and books was being introduced at the time of the previous inspection and has been successfully extended to all courses.

143. PAL does not conduct enough assessment, monitoring and recording of learners' progress. Initial assessments of learners' skills are informal and optional on most short courses. A more thorough assessment is used on longer literacy and numeracy courses to identify the learners' skill levels and plan appropriate activities and support. Since the previous inspection, the service has introduced personal learning records to record learners' progress, but these are not used effectively by most tutors and not owned by learners. The limited initial assessment does not enable tutors to clearly identify to learners their strengths and weaknesses at the beginning of programmes. Learners discuss their learning needs with tutors informally in group sessions, but these are seldom formally recorded. Learners do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the formal

skills to evaluate their own progress towards meeting set objectives.

144. In one computer class, learners received good assessments and their progress was well recorded. The tutor worked effectively with learners to identify their existing skills and knowledge, and recorded this clearly. The tutor explained the lesson's objectives. At the end of the lesson, learners had a good opportunity to evaluate their progress and identify the skills they needed to practise before the next lesson. Learners recorded their progress accurately in their individual record plans, and the tutor provided written, constructive feedback in their records. Learners reported that they felt in control of their own learning, and could explain the skills they had acquired and their learning goals. In most lessons, learners are not involved in this process, although tutors often keep their own records.

Leadership and management

145. A wide range of programmes has been developed to attract new learners. This was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. The current programme manager was appointed in January 2005 and co-ordinates further developments of the provision throughout the community. Four more first and middle schools have joined the family learning programme to reach more groups of learners with young children. Courses such as 'helping your child succeed' are designed to raise the self-esteem of parents and children, and have successfully attracted up to 12 new learners each time they are offered. A new course developed recently with the local football association has attracted 15 new learners, including dads, to the wider family learning programme. Longer sports courses are being developed in response to parent's demands. A baby massage course has been developed in local libraries to attract pre-school parents into learning activities. Links with the local probation service are also being developed.

146. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. All tutors are observed on an annual basis and constructive feedback is linked to training. Tutors meet termly at network meetings, which focus productively on the sharing of good practice and in responding to identified training needs. The shadowing scheme to train new tutors which was identified in the previous inspection is continuing, but PAL has found it difficult to recruit suitably skilled people for training.

147. Course reviews are not used sufficiently in the management of the courses. The self-assessment report's findings match the strengths and weaknesses identified by the inspection. However, the course reviews which inform the self-assessment report and the tutor network meetings have not been used sufficiently to resolve the weakness identified in the previous inspection.