

REINSPECTION REPORT

Thurrock LEA Reinspection

27 January 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

THURROCK LEA REINSPECTION

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.

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Thurrock Adult Community College (the college) provides adult and community learning, on behalf of Thurrock Local Education Authority (the LEA), through a scheme of local delegation. Provision is delivered at four main learning centres as well as at a range of community venues throughout the borough of Thurrock. Grays Adult Education Centre is the largest and most established learning centre, which also serves as the headquarters of the adult education service.

2. The principal of the college is the head of adult and community learning, within the children, education and families directorate, and is responsible to the executive head of service, learning and school effectiveness. The principal also reports to the college's governing body. Support is provided by a vice principal, an assistant principal, a head of support services, nine curriculum team leaders for the areas of learning, and approximately 80 part-time tutors.

3. The college has contracts with Essex Learning and Skills Council to provide courses in 12 of the 14 areas of learning and family learning. In 2004-05, there were 3,850 learners. At the time of reinspection there were 2,178 learners. Foundation studies constitutes one of the largest subject areas.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Foundation programmes

4. In 2004-05, 591 learners were enrolled including 531 on literacy, numeracy and language programmes, and 60 on programmes for people with learning difficulties. The numbers of learners attending these programmes at the time of the reinspection were 370 and 50, respectively. Most of the foundation provision is at the Grays Adult Education Centre, with some programmes at three other learning centres. Some programmes are specifically for women returning to education. Courses are held during mornings, afternoons and evenings, and most classes are of two hours duration. Learners on literacy, numeracy or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programmes have the opportunity to work towards external accreditation. There are no such arrangements for learners with learning difficulties. Courses for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities include information and communications technology (ICT), communication through art, tennis and badminton. There are two full-time curriculum team leaders. One manages the literacy and language provision and the other manages numeracy, personal development, and the provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. One full-time tutor, eight fractional tutors and four sessional tutors teach the courses.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	5
Number of learners interviewed	33
Number of staff interviewed	45
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	4
Number of visits	2

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. At the previous inspection, leadership and management, including equality of opportunity, were satisfactory. Quality assurance was unsatisfactory. ICT, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, English, languages and communications were all satisfactory. Family learning and visual and performing arts and media provisions were good. Foundation programmes were unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision with the exception of quality assurance, were satisfactory or better.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Foundation programmes

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	420	3

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

Strengths

- good development of learners' confidence and self-esteem
- very effective partnerships to involve hard-to-reach learners

Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed progress reviews
- incomplete quality assurance arrangements

Achievement and standards

6. Learners on all programmes develop confidence and improve their self-esteem. This strength was also identified at the previous inspection. Learners develop skills and respond well to the encouragement from their tutors and other learners. They work together effectively and understand their goals and aspirations.

7. The retention of learners, identified as a weakness at the previous inspection, is now satisfactory. Retention rates in numeracy have improved to 74 per cent and in personal development to 79 per cent. The rates for literacy programmes and for programmes for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities remain stable at 74 per cent and 91 per cent, respectively. The provider has appropriate plans to improve retention rates on courses designed to provide skills for life, which is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. These plans include a group-based induction where diagnostic assessment is used to assign learners more accurately to the right level of class, and a new system of attendance monitoring. The retention rate for ESOL classes is improving but remains unsatisfactory at 66 per cent. Attendance is satisfactory, ranging from 71 per cent in numeracy to 89 per cent in the provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

8. Learners now have significantly more opportunities to gain externally accredited qualifications and tutors prepare learners accordingly. Literacy and numeracy learners have good access to national tests and entry level qualifications are available. ESOL skills for life qualifications at all levels were introduced in 2004-05 and plans exist to externally accredit the provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities during 2005-06. In 2004-05, 136 learners gained externally accredited qualifications, representing an

increasing proportion of learners, at 31 per cent for ESOL, 33 per cent for literacy and 55 per cent for numeracy.

Quality of education and training

9. A range of partnerships with organisations, such as a leading national mental health charity and a local speech and therapy service, is very effective in developing the provision and recruiting hard-to-reach learners. These partnerships are in addition to previously identified initiatives which continue to encourage women to participate and progress in learning.

10. Standards of teaching and learning have improved a great deal since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed by inspectors, although much of the teaching is no better than satisfactory. In the better sessions, tutors draw extensively on learners' own experiences. Tutors use topics which focus on the real-life interests and needs of adult learners and which are culturally appropriate. A wide variety of learning materials is used effectively and includes visual and audio technology, the internet, dictionaries and digital interactive boards. This is a significant improvement.

11. Some outstanding teaching takes place in the provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with particularly close collaboration between tutors and support staff or volunteers. Learners are actively involved and enjoy their learning. Many of the sessions are conducted at an appropriate pace. The qualifications of tutors have improved a lot since the previous inspection and all those tutors who do not have a level 4 teaching qualification are working towards one. Accommodation is appropriate in all learning centres, with colourful displays which include learners' written work or photographs. There is a particularly friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the learning centres. As noted at the previous inspection, support for learners is satisfactory. Tutors and non-tutoring staff use their extensive knowledge of the learners to encourage them to pursue further learning opportunities.

12. The consistency and format of individual learning plans has improved since the previous inspection. Paperwork is standardised throughout the programmes. The system is co-ordinated and guidelines are issued to tutors. They have received training in how to complete learning plans. Paper and intranet copies are readily available. In a significant improvement, a lead tutor now co-ordinates the learning plans for learners who attend multiple sessions. Teachers use the results of initial and diagnostic assessment to negotiate targets with learners and learning style information is now included. Individual learning plans are linked to the appropriate national standards. Learners' targets are generally sound, but tutor's comments are occasionally written in language which is too complex and which is poorly printed.

13. In many sessions, not enough attention is given to meeting the different learning needs of learners. Schemes of work in ESOL sessions are not detailed enough and not enough priority is given to developing fluent verbal skills, including stress and intonation,

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to improve intelligibility. There is still not enough specialist, subject-specific expertise within the team.

14. The provider has not developed systematic reviews of learners' progress sufficiently. The recording of individual learners' progress is not detailed enough, and there is not enough reviewing of learners' progress towards achievement of the main programme outcomes.

Leadership and management

15. There are now regular team meetings with better levels of attendance. Communications have improved among the teams and there is significant support for staff development. Managers have successfully initiated improvements in teaching and learning. There are clear guidelines for the observation of teaching and learning, more staff have been observed, and there is an internal process for moderating observation reports. The college is now in the early stages of implementing a whole organisation strategy for skills for life.

16. Equality of opportunity remains satisfactory. The provider continues to offer a range of specialist equipment and several members of staff, including tutors, support staff and volunteers, have received training in supporting learners with dyslexia. Teaching materials have been translated into a range of the most commonly used community languages.

17. Quality assurance arrangements have improved since the previous inspection, but are still not complete. There are not enough opportunities to share good practice and self-assessment is not thorough enough. The monitoring of course reviews, individual learning plans and learner satisfaction surveys is not well established. The action plans drawn up following observations of teaching and learning are not well monitored. The process of recognising and recording progress and achievement has not been established.

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.

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	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.