

INSPECTION REPORT

Medway LEA

22 April 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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

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

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

INSPECTION REPORT

Medway LEA

Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Medway LEA	2
Grades	2
About the inspection	4
Key Findings	4
What learners like about Medway LEA	14
What learners think Medway LEA could improve	14

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	18
Equality of opportunity	20
Quality improvement	22
Information & communications technology	24
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	27
Visual & performing arts & media	30
English, languages & communications	33
Foundation programmes	36
Family learning	43

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Medway Adult and Community Learning (MACLS) is part of the lifelong learning section of the education and leisure directorate of Medway Council. MACLS directly provides adult learning opportunities in Medway and has no subcontracting arrangements. It covers an area of contrasts which includes areas of deprivation, problems of access to services and as a designated city of the Thames Gateway, identifies regeneration as fundamental to the future of the area. MACLS identifies skills for life, the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, and provision for families as service priorities and while funding is largely drawn from the Kent and Medway Learning and Skills Council (LSC), funding for specific projects is also drawn from sources such as the European Social Fund.

2. The service is managed by the strategic manager who reports to the assistant director for lifelong learning. An advisory board with representatives from Medway Council and other stakeholders advises the strategic manager on quality, staffing and planning issues. The current strategic manager is a recent appointment. The strategic manager has a small senior management team including a deputy strategic manager and post holders for marketing, quality and staff development and the head of business services. There are seven full-time heads of curriculum and 22 part-time curriculum leader posts.

3. Learning facilities are provided at 10 main centres and in a variety of community venues. Courses are offered in all 14 areas of learning and include e-learning opportunities including learndirect, but some have small numbers of learners. In 2003-04, there were approximately 17,228 enrolments by 9,382 learners on 1,637 courses.

4. Medway is the largest unitary council in the Southeast. It has a total population of 249,502 according to the census of 2001. The population is relatively young with 21.1 per cent of people aged 14 or under, compared with the national average of 18.9 per cent. The number of people aged 65 and over is lower than the national average of 12.6 per cent. It is a diverse area that contains very affluent areas alongside those that are very deprived. The unemployment rate in the Southeast is 1.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 2.3 per cent. Minority ethnic groups make up 5.4 per cent of the population, compared with the national average of 8.7 per cent, but there are significant variations across the area with 10 per cent of the population from minority ethnic groups in some areas.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 4

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate.** Leadership and management are inadequate, as are its arrangements for quality improvement. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. In information and communications technology (ICT) the provision is good. In English, languages and communications, family learning and in foundation programmes the provision is satisfactory. In hospitality, sport and leisure and in visual and performing arts and media the provision is inadequate.

6. The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process. The development plan provides a good focus on improvement and has set challenging targets to improve the overall performance of the service. Staff are highly committed, motivated and generally understand the need for change and better focus on fully establishing procedures to monitor learners' progress and achievement in non-accredited provision. MACLS has demonstrated sufficient capacity to make improvements. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process. The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.**

KEY CHALLENGES FOR MEDWAY LEA:

- improve standards in teaching and learning
- fully establish procedures to monitor learners' progress and achievement in non-accredited provision
- develop better opportunities to share good practice at curriculum level
- provide better opportunities to extend the good practice in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) across the service
- further develop curriculum management
- improve the use of management information for curriculum development
- improve the integration of equality and diversity into curriculum planning and into teaching and learning
- improve systems and understanding of the value of rigorous quality improvement
- improve risk assessment
- develop a more inclusive and self-critical self-assessment process

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

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

Information & communications technology			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Using IT</i>			
Adult and community learning	439	2	

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i> Adult and community learning	1,047	4 4

Visual & performing arts & media		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i> Adult and community learning	1,244	4

English, languages & communications		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i> Adult and community learning	1,600	3

Foundation programmes		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ESOL</i> Adult and community learning	520	3 3
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i> Adult and community learning	467	3 3
<i>Independent living and leisure skills</i> Adult and community learning	167	4 4

Family learning		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	586	3

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. MACLS has not been inspected before. However, it was inspected in December 2003 as part of the Kent and Medway Hub.

Number of inspectors	14
Number of inspection days	71
Number of learners interviewed	524
Number of staff interviewed	159
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	53
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	11

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **Many learners produce good standards of work**, develop skills, increase their confidence significantly and achieve a wide range of personal goals.
9. In ICT, learners use their skills to improve their performance at work. **In sport and leisure, learners achieve good co-ordination**, improve their strength and stamina and identify many health and social benefits.
10. **In visual and performing arts, learners achieve good technical skills** and successfully produce good products including garments, pottery and paintings. In dance classes, learners perform with good rhythmic accuracy and technical competence often within a short period of time.
11. **In literacy and numeracy courses, learners make good progress** towards the achievement of their personal goals and develop their independence and self-esteem. In ESOL, learners make significant improvements in their spoken and written English.
12. **Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop good standards of completed work** in their practical programmes including pottery, uniquely decorated chairs and colourful art work.
13. In family learning, learners achieve a better understanding of their children's needs and gain insights into how learning can be fun and part of family life.
14. Overall achievement rates, as monitored through learning agreements, were satisfactory at 77 per cent in 2003-04. However, it is not possible to assess achievement rates in sports and leisure courses and for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as individual learning outcomes are not fully completed on non-accredited programmes and there are no accredited courses.
15. In 2003-04, accreditation was available on some 40 per cent of Medway's adult and

community learning programmes. **Achievement rates on accredited courses are good in ICT and AS English.**

16. In 2003-04, 85 qualifications were offered across the service. The pass rate for qualifications was satisfactory overall at 71 per cent.

17. **Success rates are low in most accredited courses in languages, English as a foreign language (EFL) and visual and performing arts.**

18. **Overall retention rates are good** at 88 per cent for 2003-04.

19. On most programmes, attendance is satisfactory and has improved in some areas such as in literacy and numeracy courses. **There is good monitoring of attendance** and tutors are in regular contact with learners and they are aware of reasons for their learners' absence. However, there is no overall assessment of patterns of attendance.

20. **Attendance is low in many classes in ESOL.** In many lessons only half the learners are present.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
English, languages & communications	2	11	18	2	33
Family learning	0	4	6	1	11
Foundation programmes	2	11	23	3	39
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	2	8	2	12
Information & communications technology	0	4	6	1	11
Visual & performing arts & media	0	17	9	5	31
Total	4	49	70	14	137

21. Overall, 40 per cent of the teaching and learning sessions observed by inspectors were judged to be good or better, 50 per cent were satisfactory and 10 per cent were unsatisfactory. Too much teaching is only satisfactory and there is too much unsatisfactory teaching in sports and leisure, and visual and performing arts.

22. **On ICT, sports and leisure and visual and performing arts programmes**, in the better lessons, **tutors are confident, knowledgeable, use a variety of teaching styles** and ensure that learners are effectively challenged. The pace of teaching and learning is good and learners confidently experiment with new skills and develop good independent learning skills.

23. **In modern foreign languages, tutors use foreign languages very effectively** in many courses, and in the best lessons, English is seldom heard. Learners get used to hearing the language spoken at normal speed, and quickly learn to speak clearly in the language.

24. **In ICT, tutors effectively use e-mail** to set and collect homework and give feedback. This communication helps learners to make rapid progress and to achieve high standards of work.

25. **In weaker lessons in foreign languages, some tutors rely too heavily on a course**

book and accompanying tape. In some lessons there is a limited range of activities and many EFL and English classes do not have a structured approach to differentiation.

26. **In visual and performing arts, tutors use a poor range of teaching and learning strategies** to meet the needs of all learners. Their design and creative skills are not well developed. Some of the lesson plans only identify learner activities rather than learning outcomes. Tutors do not encourage learners to share learning or evaluate their own work.

27. **Well-designed teaching resources are used in English, some languages and EFL.** Original materials are used imaginatively to stimulate language development and good use is made of authentic materials from different countries, including internet resources.

28. Resources are satisfactory in sports and leisure. In ICT, the resources are adequate, but in some cases need upgrading.

29. In sports and leisure and family learning courses some activities rely on tutors providing their own resources.

30. **In visual and performing arts and English, languages and EFL there are extensive and stimulating activities** to enhance learning opportunities. Learners exhibit their work, perform in annual showcase events and visit exhibitions and fashion shows to extend their experience. Learners on English courses enjoy visits to relevant theatre productions or films.

31. **In literacy and numeracy and ESOL courses, initial assessment and diagnostic testing are thorough** and the results are used in the individual learning plans. Measurable targets are set and relevant short- and long-term goals are identified. In literacy and numeracy these are reviewed during each lesson and progress is summarised at the end of each term.

32. **There is ineffective use of formal assessment in ICT, sports and leisure, visual and performing arts, English, languages and EFL.** Learning goals are mostly for the group and do not always challenge all learners. Many tutors do not routinely record learners' skills levels or use this information adequately to plan learning activities. Initial assessment is not used sufficiently in languages to establish the learners' starting point. Learners on English general certificates of secondary education (GCSE) and AS and A2 level courses do not have an initial assessment. EFL entry tests do not diagnose individual needs sufficiently. The inadequate use of learning plans means that learners are not able to accurately measure their progress.

33. **On many courses, tutors do not recognise the value of recording learners' individual learning goals,** their starting points and their progress.

34. **In courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities there is poor identification of individual learning needs.** Literacy and numeracy skills are assessed but there is little formalised assessment of social or behavioural needs and little exploration of the learners' aims. Individual learning plans are not detailed, do not adequately reflect the abilities of learners and learning outcomes are too general.

35. **MACLS is effective in meeting the needs and interests of a wide range of learners.** Most areas have developed a good range of courses. In ICT, courses have also been

responsive to community groups and employer needs. The learndirect programme provides provision for those who cannot regularly attend classes. Employer needs are also met with the development of a small programme of business and office skills to help learners start their own business. Also national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in care, teaching assistants and early years care and education are available, some as part of the 'profit from learning' initiative.

36. Learners are able to choose between accredited and non-accredited courses in most areas of the curriculum, apart from sport and leisure.

37. The good range of courses in literacy and numeracy and ESOL widens participation and supports the LEA's priorities to support social inclusion and contribute to the economic regeneration of the area. Literacy and numeracy courses are continually expanding to meet the needs of individuals, groups and organisations. ESOL provision is extensive and includes provision in a local factory where learners can attend lessons after their shift.

38. Family learning programmes work collaboratively and establish effective partnerships with a wide range of organisations. These activities support capacity building within local communities and encourage wider participation by families, many of whom have had poor experiences of education in the past.

39. Good support and guidance is offered in literacy and numeracy classes. This includes good use of learning support assistants and volunteers who work collaboratively with tutors and make a positive contribution to learning.

40. Course information for foreign languages is inadequate. Much of the information is too general, and does not give learners enough information on the skills needed at each level.

41. In courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, learning support in practical programmes is inadequate. There are insufficient learning support staff and in most classes where carers are present, the tutors rely on them to help deliver the teaching. The range of activities is restricted and learners often have to wait a long time to receive individual attention.

Leadership and management

42. There has been a good focus on national priorities. Strategic planning for the service identifies an effective programme to build capacity and support social inclusion within the local population. Targets for the recruitment of new learners and for the achievement of skills for life qualifications and NVQs at level 2 are clearly identified. The service has made a particularly good response to the national skills for life strategy, to employer needs and to the economic regeneration of the area.

43. Staff development is satisfactory. Staff have regular professional development meetings with their manager to develop and monitor their individual training programme. Staff have access to the council's training programmes and teaching staff can access distance learning teaching qualifications. However, a recent and significant reduction in staff development funding has limited opportunities in some areas of learning. Staff are adequately qualified.

44. Communications across the service are satisfactory. The service produces a staff newsletter and all key documents and minutes of meetings are available for staff on the intranet. Good use is made of the online forum for discussion, exchanging ideas and for sharing good practice.

45. The professional development centre has successfully supported the local and wider need to increase ESOL teacher training and up-skilling of existing tutors. It is currently extending its work to literacy and numeracy learner support qualifications.

46. Marketing activities are satisfactory. During the current year, the service has started to work with Medway Council's research department to collect data on needs analysis to assist managers in curriculum planning.

47. **A high number of classes are cancelled across the service.** Managers are now required to assess why they have developed a new course, before it is included in the programme. However, it is too early to assess the impact of improved assessment of new courses.

48. **Curriculum management is inadequate** in some areas of learning. The service does not have sufficient staffing and structure to manage and develop the curriculum effectively. This is particularly evident in sports and leisure and programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many managers have a number of roles and fractional appointments mean that staff do not have sufficient time to carry out all aspects of their role effectively. The service does not have a curriculum strategy to ensure a consistent approach to curriculum planning across the service.

49. The achievement of overall targets is satisfactory, although there was a slight decrease in achieving the number of learners in accredited provision in 2003-04. Targets were exceeded in the same year for non-accredited programmes.

50. **There is insufficient use of management information.** The system is reliable and produces current and accurate data, but managers have not had sufficient training in the use of data for effective decision-making. Managers do not use data effectively to identify trends in their area of learning and do not routinely use data as part of course reviews.

51. **The service has been slow in developing indicators to measure the learners' progress** and achievement of their learning goals on non-accredited programmes. It has been particularly slow to develop the initial assessment aspect of this process.

52. **The service has not sufficiently developed and extended its work in literacy, numeracy and languages.** The well-developed basic skills strategy in foundation programmes has yet to influence support for learners across the curriculum. In four of the six areas and in one contributory area, learners' needs were not adequately identified at enrolment.

53. **The service has yet to develop a strategy relating to outcomes for young people.** Some of the staff who work with young children in family learning have not been trained to work with young children.

54. The management of resources is satisfactory. Accommodation is adequate in most

areas of learning and facilities in arts and craft are good. Learning resources are adequate, although in ICT some of the computers are out of date, and in a few areas of learning, some activities rely on tutors providing their own equipment.

55. The service makes good use of partnerships, projects and a range of funding to widen participation. Family learning initiatives provide valuable opportunities in the community to extend learning and support families. A wide range of innovative initiatives encourages new learners and targets personal and vocational needs.

56. There is particularly effective work with black and minority ethnic groups. A number of staff are employed to manage and develop links including 12 community learning champions who work with, and are based in, specific minority ethnic communities.

57. The service has made a good response to requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 and it has made many improvements to buildings. Work has been done to raise awareness of discriminations against people with declared disabilities. The appointment of a new manager to administer and promote additional learning support has increased the number of learners who are now receiving support.

58. Action plans in response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 have been drawn up and plans are in place to develop on equalities impact assessment across the service.

59. There is insufficient planning of the traditional adult and community learning curriculum to reflect cultural diversity. Although staff have attended training, this has had a limited impact on the curriculum.

60. Systems for quality improvements are inadequate. There is no framework to set and monitor standards and targets, annual course reviews, regular audits and self-assessment. The service has set up a quality group but their work has yet to have a significant impact on the service.

61. Safe working practices and risk assessment are inadequate in sports and leisure courses. The assessments are generic to the activity and do not take account of the facilities and learner numbers. There is no specialist occupational assessor.

62. Risk assessment is inadequate in practical sessions for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. No risk assessments are carried out for individual learners. Although generic risk assessments are completed for any adult learner using the facility, these do not take account of the specific needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

63. The programme of course reviews is inconsistent across the service. In some areas of learning, reviews provide useful information for planning, while in other areas little review takes place. Many reviews are poorly completed and insufficiently analytical.

64. Lesson observations are not effective. The new system is not yet fully established and there has been insufficient training for staff. In most areas of learning, inspectors gave lower grades than those in the service's observation system. In particular, the system did not place sufficient emphasis on learning.

65. The self-assessment report is satisfactory, although it is descriptive and does not provide sufficient information about the quality of teaching and learning. There is insufficient involvement by all levels of staff in the self-assessment process. The development plan offers a clear direction for improvement, clear objectives for the service and indicates that the service has sufficient capacity to develop a culture of constructive evaluation and make improvements.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good focus on national priorities
- good partnerships and initiatives to increase participation by under-represented groups

Weaknesses

- insufficient resources and structures to manage and develop the curriculum
- inadequate system for quality improvement

Information & communications technology

Using IT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention and achievement
- good attainment of skills and knowledge
- very good range of courses
- good staff support

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of initial assessment

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Leisure, sport and recreation

Grade 4

Strengths

- good development of practical skills

Weaknesses

- inadequate use of individual learning plans
- inadequate risk assessment
- inadequate use of quality assurance procedures

Visual & performing arts & media

Strengths

- good standard of technical skills in most classes
- stimulating enrichment activities which enhance learning
- good facilities in art and craft

Weaknesses

- too much unsatisfactory teaching and learning
- ineffective use of formal assessment to plan and monitor learners' progress
- insufficiently robust quality assurance procedures

English, languages & communications

Strengths

- good use of foreign languages in many lessons
- good use of well-designed resources in many lessons
- good range of programmes
- good support for tutors

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of initial assessment in English and foreign languages
- inadequate course information for foreign languages
- insufficiently rigorous lesson observations in foreign languages and EFL

Foundation programmes

ESOL

Grade 3

Strengths

- good attainment
- effective planning of learning
- good and accessible range of provision
- good learner support
- very good staff development and team management

Weaknesses

- low attendance in many classes
- disruption to learning by frequent changes in class composition in beginner classes
- insufficient collation and analysis of data to support improvement

Literacy and numeracy

Grade 3

Strengths

- good and responsive range of provision
- good support and guidance for learners
- effective staff development opportunities

Weaknesses

- ineffective system for monitoring progression and achievement

Independent living and leisure skills

Grade 4

Strengths

- good standard of completed work
- very good communication with outside agencies

Weaknesses

- poor identification of individual learning needs
- inadequate learning support in practical programmes
- insufficient risk assessment in practical sessions

Family learning

Strengths

- good development of personal skills
- effective partnerships support widening participation

Weaknesses

- inappropriate targets for recruitment
- inadequate management information

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT MEDWAY LEA:

- friendly, supportive centres
- 'taking home things we make in class'
- being able to meet socially in the canteen and making new friends
- 'my son has come on in leaps and bounds'
- 'attending the centre has changed my life'
- enrolment on the telephone
- 'use of e-mail to help you catch up if you miss a lesson'
- choice of courses
- 'learning new skills and increasing my confidence'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK MEDWAY LEA COULD IMPROVE:

- the timings of crèche opening
- the quality of accommodation
- the pre-course information
- the range of levels in classes
- the sports hall for belly dancing - it is cluttered
- the length of courses
- the better publicity about the centres - it could be better
- the equipment, which is out of date
- the amount of time filling in forms - it should be less
- the course information

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 Mentor	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them
Learning goals	Main learning goals Secondary	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. 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 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 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.
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 self managing, sustainable communities.

Active citizenship	The process whereby people recognise the power they have to improve the quality of life for others and make conscious effort to do so: the process whereby people recognise the power of organisations and institutions to act in the interests of the common good and exercise their influence to ensure that they do so. Adult learning contributes to active citizenship.
---------------------------	--

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

Strengths

- good focus on national priorities
- good partnerships and initiatives to increase participation by under-represented groups

Weaknesses

- insufficient resources and structures to manage and develop the curriculum
- inadequate system for quality improvement

66. There is a good focus on national priorities. This provides the service with a clear framework to support economic regeneration and the development of the Thames Gateway. The service has a well-planned three-year development programme to build capacity and support social inclusion within the local population. The plan includes targets for the recruitment of new learners and for the achievement of skills for life qualifications and NVQs at level 2. Priority target groups are clearly identified and managers regularly monitor, review and update the development plan.

67. MACLS has made a range of successful bids for additional funding to meet its objectives and works closely with a range of partners, the authority and in the local community. For example, within the authority, projects with children's services have supported skills for life provision in some economically deprived areas. The service has also provided access to ICT for new learners through partnerships with the library service and works with schools to provide skills for life support for teaching assistants. Partnerships with the voluntary sector and stronger links with Mid-Kent College are also supporting the development of skills for life programmes. The adult and community learning service has supported the local and wider need to deliver ESOL programmes by establishing a dedicated professional development centre. This deals with significant local and national skill shortages in this area and provides training for staff in the whole of the Kent and Medway LSC region. The service is also responding to employer needs by identifying employer engagement as a key aspect of its three-year development plan. It has developed specific work-based ESOL programmes, a small programme of business and office skills to help learners start their own business, and NVQs in care, teaching assistants and early years care and education, some as part of the 'profit from learning' initiative. It has successfully bid to deliver the pilot project for the new NVQ-based information technology (IT) qualification. The service also offers learning opportunities to Medway Council employees with a 10 per cent fee reduction to encourage participation, as well as opportunities for council employees to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

68. Although the service provides a good focus on the skills for life agenda in its partnership work and in the foundation area of learning, this has yet to have sufficient impact across the whole curriculum. It has not developed a strategy for literacy, numeracy and language skills across the service. In four of the six areas and in one contributory area, learners' needs were not adequately identified at enrolment. Although the service has identified the need to review its work with young learners in the development plan, it has

yet to develop a strategy relating to outcomes for the small number of young people currently in provision.

69. The provision of staff development opportunities is satisfactory. Full-time staff have professional development meetings with their manager twice a year to develop and monitor their individual training programme. Many staff have weekly meetings with their manager to discuss their progress in achieving their objectives. Staff have access to the authority's wide-ranging generic training programme. Teaching staff can access distance learning teaching qualifications provided by a local university. The service organises a well-structured annual conference for tutors which includes discussion on national issues and opportunities for tutors to meet and share experience. However, a recent and significant reduction in staff development funding has limited opportunities in some areas of learning, in particular for subject and course development. Some development needs identified through course evaluations have not been funded.

70. Communications within MACLS are satisfactory and staff value the support they receive from their colleagues and managers. In some areas of learning, staff meet formally and regularly. Meetings are recorded and action points are followed through. The service produces a good and detailed staff newsletter which includes useful information about national initiatives and a range of staff development opportunities. All key documents and minutes of meetings are available for staff on the intranet and many make use of these. In some areas of learning, staff use a very effective online forum for discussion, exchanging ideas and for sharing good practice.

71. Marketing is satisfactory. A draft marketing policy is now available on the intranet. However, the service does not have a marketing strategy to support achievement of its objectives in the three-year development plan. During 2004-05, the service has worked with Medway Council's research department to collect data to improve needs analysis. This data is now available on the intranet to assist managers in curriculum planning. Publicity materials have now been reviewed and most fit into a corporate style. Some new promotional activities have been developed, for example road shows, advertising points in public buildings and retail outlets, taster courses and course fee reductions targeting particular learners. A website has been developed to provide course information for learners and the service has worked with a partner to produce a compact disc which links with the website to access up-to-date information. A marketing group meets regularly to monitor and review marketing activities. The self-assessment report identifies insufficient assessment of curriculum and links this to a high number of cancelled classes. Managers, when planning their curriculum, are now required to complete a form to support the inclusion of each course in their programme. However, it is too early to see the impact of some of these measures and the service still closes a large number of courses in some areas of learning.

72. The service does not have sufficient capacity and structures to manage and develop the curriculum effectively. Curriculum management is weak in some areas of learning and there are insufficient arrangements to allow the sharing of good practice. Staff development, including equality and diversity training, has had a limited impact on curriculum development. There is inadequate use of assessment to plan and monitor learning in all areas of learning with the exception of ESOL and literacy and numeracy provision. Many managers have a number of roles, and some middle managers with responsibility for large areas of the curriculum are appointed to fractional posts and do not

have sufficient time to carry out all aspects of their role effectively. The service does not have a published curriculum policy or strategy to ensure a consistent approach to curriculum planning across the organisation. In 2002-03, the service did not achieve its financial targets. Managers are now given targets and many are beginning to have a better understanding of how to plan the curriculum efficiently. Data is available for managers to monitor and review performance and to help them plan developments, but many have not had sufficient training in the use of data for effective decision-making. Some managers have an incomplete understanding of trends and developments in their curriculum area.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

73. There are good partnerships and initiatives to increase participation by under-represented and hard-to-reach groups. Projects are run in community locations at times that suit the needs of learners. The service works closely with the regional lifelong learning partnership, and is a key partner in two initiatives targeted at improving deprived, or developing ethnic communities, through the provision of targeted learning opportunities. There are productive links with the local race equality council, the black and minority ethnic forum, a very wide range of local community and voluntary groups, schools, statutory agencies, Connexions, and religious organisations. There are particularly good links with black and minority ethnic communities including social, professional, religious activities, and community leaders. A number of staff are employed to manage and develop links with these communities using targeted marketing and outreach programmes. Twelve community learning champions have been appointed to work with specific minority ethnic communities.

74. One project, 'neighbourhood learning in deprived communities', has been successful in attracting new learners to a range of learning activities. ESOL classes feature regularly, and are run specifically for certain age groups, ethnic groups and genders. Other very focused and targeted projects have been identified by the service and/or the communities themselves, including healthy eating and basic fitness, basic computer skills for record-keeping for small businesses or sole traders and first aid in family settings. The self-defence project is targeted at minority ethnic taxi drivers and restaurant workers. Twenty-four new learners have signed up for the initial workshop. The service also runs job clubs using laptop computers running software which assesses the comparative qualification level and content of qualifications gained in home countries against UK standards.

75. In 2003-04, 188 black and minority ethnic learners, of whom 110 were learners new to learning, received training in basic skills. Ninety-five community volunteers received training in health and safety, first aid, and creative writing within the context of the 'neighbourhood learning in deprived communities' project. Twelve learners progressed to additional adult and community learning courses. In the current year 79 learners have attended classes, of whom 48 are new learners.

76. An innovative community improvement project is operating in a predominantly white, working-class housing estate where there has been no recorded involvement in adult learning by any of the residents. The project involves turning an area of waste and contaminated ground outside a children's nursery into a play and learning area. The project has successfully brought together MACLS gardening tutors, learners on a gardening course and residents in the transformation project. Residents are gaining community volunteering and qualifications through the Award Scheme Development Accreditation

Network during the 20-week project. A new video editing project, has been identified at the same site using computing resources sourced by the community, MACLS staff and residents. Other projects include first aid for families teaching children at home, family learning sessions for teenage parents in baby nutrition and self-esteem, and learning sessions in a local factory.

77. The deputy strategic manager of the service has overall responsibility for promoting and ensuring equality of opportunity. An equality of opportunity steering group, involving other senior staff, now meets regularly to discuss and agree actions for a wide range of equality and diversity issues. Meetings are well recorded and contain clearly identified actions, timescales and responsibilities. The service has a satisfactory range of equality of opportunity and diversity policies, statements and procedures, which are up to date and responsive to all current legislation. Equality and diversity matters are regularly included in staff newsletters. Staff and learner handbooks make good and clear references to policies. Equality of opportunity statements in a wide range of languages are clearly displayed in general and classroom areas. The range of printed course marketing materials is primarily available in English but a free local interpreting service is available to those who need it. Outreach workers and community learning champions, communicate the details of mainstream courses to community groups.

78. During the past three years, staff training sessions have included the content, implications and impact of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, mental health and disability awareness. However, in most curriculum areas this training has had a limited impact. There is insufficient planning of the traditional curriculum to reflect equality and cultural diversity. There is no comprehensive arrangement for initial assessment and this limits the performance of learners. There are crèche facilities for learners at each of the two main learning centres in Rochester and Gillingham. Family learning sessions are run in rooms which are equipped with play areas and cooking facilities. Most premises and facilities are accessible to all, although some specialist facilities such as photographic dark rooms and pottery glazing rooms in some centres are inaccessible to learners with restricted mobility. There is insufficient accessible information for independent learning and leisure learners.

79. Additional funding is used satisfactorily to support learners. The service identified that it was making insufficient use of additional support funding. A new manager was appointed in November 2004 to administer and promote additional and learning support funding for learners on accredited and non-accredited courses. The number of learners receiving additional support through funding has increased significantly through better use of learner disclosure forms and new publicity materials. Learners are helped with course fee payments, access to specific adaptive technologies or support, transport and free childcare. In 2003-04, 274 learners were supported, and in 2004-05 to date that figure has increased to 605. There is some indication that learners who receive additional funding and support have better retention and achievement rates than non-supported learners.

80. Data on the age, gender and ethnicity of learners is collected routinely and is now being used at a strategic level to monitor the impact of equality and diversity policies. Participation rates by black and minority ethnic and under-represented groups in ESOL and family learning classes are high, but in all other provision generally reflect existing local demographics. In 2003-04, overall minority ethnic participation was 16 per cent in accredited courses and 7 per cent in non-accredited programmes. Between September

2004 and January 2005 the rate had fallen slightly to 14 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. Overall, minority ethnic achievement rates during 2003-04 were 88 per cent in accredited courses, 5 per cent higher than non-minority ethnic achievement rates. Although this information is disseminated to curriculum areas, it is not yet sufficiently used to plan the programmes.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 4

81. MACLS has an inadequate system for quality improvement. There is no comprehensive framework to set and monitor standards and targets, annual course reviews, regular audits and self-assessment. The service is currently developing a service quality manual to provide a framework. The strategic manager is responsible for quality assurance within the service and there is a senior manager for quality and staff development who leads on self-assessment activities. The service has set up a quality group but meetings are infrequent, and although actions are identified, these are not set within clear timescales. The activities of this group are beginning to increase the profile of continuous improvement with staff, although there are inconsistencies in the application of systems. In some areas of learning, improvement activities are at an early stage of development.

82. MACLS sets numerous targets including those for participation and learner retention and achievement. It collects detailed learner data, and although the system provides up-to-date information, this is insufficiently used by curriculum areas as part of the quality process. In 2003-04, MACLS achieved 89 per cent of its learner number targets, although basic skills exceeded the target. Achievement on accredited courses is good in ICT and AS level English, but success rates are low in most accredited courses in languages, EFL and visual and performing arts. The overall retention rate was 88 per cent for all courses in 2003-04, which was an 8 per cent increase on the previous year. The overall achievement rate was 77 per cent in 2003-04, a slight decrease on 2002-03. Although MACLS has been working on recording achievement in non-accredited provision for some years, the quality audit has highlighted the need to work on the initial assessment stage of this recording process. This weakness in initial assessment is identified in a significant number of areas of learning. Target-setting in many individual plans is weak, with the exception of those in literacy, numeracy and ESOL, which are well used to identify needs, evaluate progress and confirm outcomes.

83. The programme of course review provides feedback on individual programmes and includes information about enrolments, learner support, achievement and progress. Tutors are asked to complete a course profile to summarise learners' feedback, provide an overarching evaluation of the course and identify key action points. In some areas of learning these are completed well and provide useful information for planning. In others they are poorly completed and insufficiently analytical, and in some cases there is little information given. Some curriculum leaders complete programme reviews to summarise this information on retention, achievement and learner feedback, and include information from teaching observations. In some areas of learning, curriculum leaders do not carry out a programme review. While there is an annual review process for course files, this did not take place last year.

84. Learner feedback is collected every term, and improved processes enable comparison and benchmarking with national surveys. Recent action plans identify the need to encourage closer analysis of learner data to plan the programme. The authority's complaints procedure is analysed by ethnicity and gender rather than by course. There is

no action plan from this analysis.

85. The self-assessment report identifies an increase in teaching and learning observations and its role in planning more effective, targeted training. The revised system was started in October 2004 and is based on a three-year cycle which aims to observe 33 per cent of staff each year and includes a moderation process. However, the system is not yet fully established and there has been insufficient training for observation staff. Most areas of learning were given lower grades than those in the observation system and, in particular, the system did not place sufficient focus on learning. While the self-assessment report identified a very high number of good or better observations, inspectors found a high proportion of only satisfactory teaching, with few inspiring, imaginative lessons.

86. Internal verification systems are satisfactory and in ICT they are good. MACLS has a clear internal verification policy. Staff are qualified and experienced in working with external awarding bodies. Regular meetings are held and a response is made to comments in external verifier reports.

87. MACLS bases its quality assurance on the self-assessment process which identifies key issues for quality improvement. The self-assessment report is satisfactory and, although rather descriptive, it is thorough and self-critical in some areas. There is insufficient involvement in the self-assessment process by all staff. Although many of the strengths and weaknesses in the report matched those identified by inspectors, some strengths were overstated and, in particular, there was insufficient information about the quality of teaching and learning. Only two of the seven overall grades matched those given by inspectors.

88. The development plan includes a clear direction for improvement, supported by targets for development. This provides a good indication of an increasing focus on the improvement agenda and the development of a culture of constructive evaluation.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Using IT</i>		2
Adult and community learning	439	2

89. ICT courses are offered at the main centres in Rochester, Gillingham, at the lifelong learning centre and in five smaller venues throughout the area. During inspection week, 439 learners were enrolled on 50 courses. Approximately 62 per cent of learners are on accredited courses. Part-time courses are provided at levels from entry level to level 2. Classes are run on six days a week, at various times. In the current year, 72 per cent of learners are women, 6 per cent are from black or minority ethnic groups, 10 per cent have declared learning difficulties or disabilities and 31 per cent of learners are aged 60 or over. There are 20 part-time tutors, managed by a full-time head of curriculum, and two part-time curriculum leaders.

Using IT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention and achievement
- good attainment of skills and knowledge
- very good range of courses
- good staff support

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of initial assessment

Achievement and standards

90. Retention and achievement rates are good for accredited and non-accredited provision and confirm a pattern of continuous improvement. The overall retention rate for all provision for 2004-05 is 96 per cent and the achievement rate is 95 per cent. A large number of courses in the current year indicate 100 per cent retention rates.

91. There is good attainment of skills and knowledge. Learners are set challenging targets, and interesting and relevant tasks suited to their abilities. For example, basic computer courses encourage learners who progress quickly to take extra units of accreditation. Learners are proud of their progress and describe how they have met their personal and vocational goals. A large number of learners are in employment and they frequently use the skills they gain in courses to improve their performance in their current job or to gain qualifications which enhance their curriculum vitae.

92. Attendance at observed lessons is satisfactory, at an average of 74 per cent. Tutors are in regular contact with their learners and they are aware of the learners' reasons for

absence. However, no systematic data is collected to provide an overall assessment of attendance.

The quality of provision

93. The range of courses is very good. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Learners are able to progress from entry level to level 2. For example, in digital photography, learners usually start as beginners, progress to intermediate level and then to advanced. The programme also offers a range of choices for learners to pursue so that following an introduction to computers course, learners can progress to either the next level of the basic course or to an examination-based IT course. Some classes offer less common but prestigious qualifications such as programming. There are classes on six days a week, at various times of the day, in eight venues across the Medway area. Some courses are established favourites, such as text processing, but others include fun with computers for retired people and the internet shopping and selling courses planned for next academic year. Other courses are innovative and indicate a good response to employer needs. For example, the department was chosen by the national LSC to pilot the new NVQ-based IT qualification at level 2. MACLS also responds to employer needs with courses run for Medway Council. Courses are organised in response to the needs of community groups like a local Chinese women's group, an association for the blind and a Medway housing association. The learndirect programme complements mainstream provision in that it offers learning opportunities to those who cannot regularly attend classes at the provider's centres. Some of these courses lead to qualifications.

94. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the better lessons, tutors are confident and knowledgeable and ensure that activities meet individual needs and encourage learners to support each other. Activities are imaginative and learners are encouraged to summarise their learning at the end of each lesson. Tutors use e-mail regularly to communicate with learners to set and collect homework and give feedback. Communication with learners who use this system is very effective and it helps them to make rapid progress and to achieve high standards of work. Individual progress is carefully monitored and recorded by the tutors.

95. Most learners have their own computers and practise what they have learnt in class. Those who do not have a personal computer frequently use the open access computers which are located in the learndirect centre at Gillingham and the open access centre at Rochester. Learners are very motivated and most pay substantial fees and some travel considerable distances to attend classes.

96. There is insufficient initial assessment and identification of learners' support needs. New learners are asked to show previously gained certificates for some externally assessed courses, but for most learners, a self-assessment checklist is the only form of initial assessment. The absence of a thorough initial assessment limits the accurate assessment of learners' progress and achievements. Support needs are only usually identified after learners have started a programme of study. In some cases, learners have been transferred to a more suitable course once their individual needs emerge after some weeks on a course. Many learners receive no guidance other than that printed in the course directory or on information sheets, although others do contact tutors directly by telephone or e-mail.

Leadership and management

97. Staff are well supported. There are regular paid staff meetings both for general communication and for specific issues such as the changes to awarding body requirements. There is an annual staff conference and a variety of training workshops on topics such as the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and these are well attended. Each tutor has a regular individual meeting with the head of curriculum.

98. The programme of staff observation has been running for several years and is effective in identifying problems and determining training needs. The course review system identifies training requirements and offers staff the opportunity to make recommendations for improving the course. The recently established online staff forum is used extensively to exchange information and teaching resources. It provides a very effective system for hourly paid tutors to keep in touch with managers and with one another.

99. The provision has a good reputation as a quality centre by a number of external bodies. The centre was the only adult and community learning service to be selected by the national LSC as a pilot centre for the new NVQ-based IT qualification.

100. Sometimes planned courses cannot be run because numbers of learners recruited fall just below the minimum viable number. The self-assessment report identifies the need to reduce the number of closed courses as a priority. Accommodation and classroom computing resources are adequate but in some cases need upgrading. Tutors are generally well qualified or working towards qualifications and some are recognised as experts in subjects such as website design.

101. The self-assessment report did not cover all aspects of the 'Common Inspection Framework' and most strengths and weaknesses were only partially recognised. Tutors are not sufficiently involved in the self-assessment process, although course reviews and the results of learner surveys were used to prepare the report.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i> Adult and community learning	1,047	4 4

102. At the time of inspection, there were 1,596 enrolments by 1,047 learners in sport, leisure and travel. A total of 95 courses have taken place during 2004-05 and at the time of inspection 37 courses were operating. MACLS offers a range of courses including yoga, tai chi, Medau, badminton, circuit training, archery, bridge and keep fit for the over 50s. These courses are provided at eight venues including schools and the lifelong learning centre. Currently there are no accredited courses. Courses are offered during the daytime, evening and weekends and run for between five and 33 weeks. Approximately 82 per cent of learners are women and approximately 5 per cent are from a minority ethnic group. Learners with a declared disability account for approximately 8 per cent of learners. Twenty-five part-time tutors teach on these courses for between one and eight and a half hours each week. A curriculum leader employed by Medway LEA manages the provision on a fractional contract.

Leisure, sport and recreation**Grade 4***Strengths*

- good development of practical skills

Weaknesses

- inadequate use of individual learning plans
- inadequate risk assessment
- inadequate use of quality assurance procedures

Achievement and standards

103. Good practical skills are demonstrated in most lessons. In tai chi, learners of mixed ability at intermediate level perform the short form to a high standard. This is particularly impressive because they are based in a noisy, distracting environment. In all yoga classes, learners perform precise, challenging postures. In archery, beginners are able to achieve good skills on their first or second session. Most learners are challenged to achieve good co-ordination, and improve their balance, strength and stamina. In yoga and tai chi, there is good emphasis on improving posture and working intelligently with the mind and body. In Medau, one learner reported that by improving her co-ordination, she was able to learn to swim successfully. Learners are able to identify many health and social benefits. Many learners on courses for those aged over 60 report that the classes are vital to their health and social life. They make new friends and establish good support networks. Learners report improved memory skills since joining contract bridge. Some tai chi and yoga learners have benefited from learning about the philosophical or spiritual aspects of these subjects, and gave examples of transferring these into their everyday lives.

104. Retention rates overall are satisfactory at approximately 75 per cent for 2004. A

significant number of older learners have attended the same or different classes for between two and 20 years. It is not possible to assess achievement rates as there are no accredited courses and individual learning outcomes are not completed on the non-accredited programme. Overall, attendance levels are satisfactory, although attendance during the inspection was low at 65 per cent.

The quality of provision

105. The standard of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with 67 per cent of observed lessons graded as satisfactory. However, 17 per cent were unsatisfactory. In the better lessons, tutors use a variety of teaching styles. Clear demonstrations of exercises are followed by regular checking to ensure that learners are in the correct position. Some tutors stand at the front of the class while the class mirrors the activity. Although this method allows learners to work aerobically without interruption, it limits opportunities to correct or check the safety of the learners' movements. The tutors understand their learners' health needs and ability levels and put this knowledge to good use by suggesting suitable modifications or alternatives to exercises. However, there is inadequate use of individual learning plans. Although most learners have learning plans, group goals are photocopied onto these and very few learners have individual targets. Most learners are not able to accurately measure their progress. Assessment is perfunctory for many learners, although a few tutors have devised their own assessment process. Most medical questionnaires are completed appropriately by learners and referred to effectively by tutors. However, most of these are kept in the tutor files and are not stored confidentially.

106. Resources to support learning are satisfactory. Most sites have adequate access for people with restricted mobility. The facilities include halls with sprung floors, halls and gyms with mirrors, and sports halls. Most are clean and comfortable, although one room is not large enough to cope with the registered number of learners. Most activities require little equipment and there has been recent replacement and addition of mats in response to the self-assessment report. Some activities rely on tutors providing their own equipment, particularly in the outreach centres. The tutors provide specialist equipment for archery and Medau.

107. The range of provision is satisfactory to meet individual and community needs. Although there are no accredited courses, the authority's sports development initiative offers free sports coaching awards. Some progression opportunities are offered within a small range of programmes including archery, golf, bridge, badminton, yoga and tai chi. Learners are able to broaden their experience by moving onto additional courses to improve their skill levels and understanding of the tactical elements of the activity. There is some evidence that the provision makes a small contribution to learners' need to stay safe and healthy and some learners initially join through referrals from their doctor.

108. Guidance for learners is satisfactory. Clear initial advice and pre-course information for learners is available, including well-produced brochures and handouts with learning outcomes and frequently asked questions. Some tutors have produced clearly written fact sheets that give further information about the subject. Tutors offer good ongoing informal support for learners.

Leadership and management

109. Curriculum development is limited. The programme is being developed through the addition of progression routes to a small number of existing courses such as yoga, tai chi and badminton. Archery has been introduced to improve the participation of men, and improver courses are now being offered. However, there is no use of data to plan the developments. There are no links between this area of learning, local authority sport development initiatives and other service priorities.

110. Safe working practices are not monitored sufficiently and risk assessment is inadequate. The assessments are generic to the activity and do not take account of the facility and learner numbers. There is no specialist occupational assessor. Some rooms used by learners of retirement age are too hot and the heating is not controllable. In one room, there is also an unacceptable amount of additional furniture which creates risks, and there is no facility to open windows.

111. Quality assurance is inadequate. There are two team meetings each year but attendance is too low for meetings to support continuous improvement effectively. There are few observations of teaching and learning. There is no formal system for checking continuing professional development. Although many tutors are adequately qualified and competent in their subject area, most tutors maintain their competence by paying for their own professional development. Some tutors do not have a formal teaching qualification, although Medway LEA is offering accredited tutor training which some tutors have achieved. Tutors' qualifications are not monitored to check their currency. There is insufficient sharing of good practice except in yoga.

112. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently detailed and does not accurately reflect the provision. Staff are not fully involved in the process. Few areas for development have been dealt with.

Visual & performing arts & media**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other contributory areas Adult and community learning	1,244	4

113. Visual and performing arts and media is the largest area of learning in Medway LEA's community learning programme. The training takes place in nine different centres which are located across the borough. At the time of the inspection, there were 120 courses accounting for 1,400 enrolments by 1,244 learners. Courses cover a range of visual arts, crafts, performing arts and lens media. These include pottery, watercolour painting, stained glass, textile art, needlecraft, Asian dressmaking, fashion wear, bobbin lace making, wood carving, upholstery, guitar playing, singing, belly dancing, salsa dancing, drama, and photography. There are 62 daytime courses and 54 evening courses, with a few short summer courses in addition to Saturday classes and one-day workshops. Classes are usually of two hours duration.

114. Most courses are non-accredited, although there are five accredited courses in visual arts and crafts. Many classes have a mix of beginners and improvers, but the provider also offers a small range of courses from beginners to advanced level. Eighty per cent of learners are women, 40 per cent are over 60 years of age, and 4 per cent are from a minority ethnic background. All sites visited by inspectors are accessible for learners with restricted mobility. Teaching is carried out by 33 part-time tutors and the curriculum is managed by one head of curriculum and four part-time curriculum leaders.

Strengths

- good standard of technical skills in most classes
- stimulating enrichment activities which enhance learning
- good facilities in art and craft

Weaknesses

- too much unsatisfactory teaching and learning
- ineffective use of formal assessment to plan and monitor learners' progress
- insufficiently robust quality assurance procedures

Achievement and standards

115. Learners achieve good technical skills in most classes. They apply a range of skills and techniques appropriately in individual and group projects. In a soft furnishing class, learners who were unable to use a sewing machine are now producing good products. In a sewing group, the learners are using complicated commercial patterns for their garment making. Learners in a pottery class are able to make a range of pottery such as slab pots, coil pots, pots thrown on the wheel, modelled forms and large impressive garden pots. In some painting classes, learners experiment with a wide range of different media. In music instrumental classes, learners use correct techniques and posture in rehearsal. In dance classes, learners perform with good rhythmic accuracy and technical competence, often

within a short period of time. Retention and attainment rates on non-accredited courses are satisfactory. All lessons start punctually and the average attendance rate during inspection was satisfactory at 79 per cent.

116. There are low success rates on a small number of accredited courses, particularly in interior decoration and stained glass courses. Achievement rates are low in externally accredited courses in pottery and ceramics.

The quality of provision

117. An extensive range of stimulating enrichment activities enhances learning opportunities. Learners exhibit their work in a biannual art exhibition and also perform in an annual showcase event. Learners on needlework and patchwork courses have visited two national quilt exhibitions. Learners on pottery courses are able to make pots to fire in a specialist raku kiln at a private pottery. Many learners visit the pottery on a regular basis with pots to be fired. In the fashion and textile department, learners on soft furnishing courses visit show homes for new ideas for their next project. Art learners visited Barcelona and acclaimed London galleries. Learners in the sewing department attend many fashion shows and design exhibitions for new and innovative ideas. Learners on a singing for pleasure course perform at a variety of venues in and around the area. The curriculum area has an extensive range of productive links with external arts organisations.

118. Learners benefit from a satisfactory range of arts and crafts courses at venues across Medway LEA, and some learners attend more than one class. These include specialised subjects such as flower painting in watercolours, interior decorating, art history, calligraphy and an advanced painting and allied arts workshop. A small but growing number of courses are offered at different levels, providing progression opportunities for learners. A programme of Saturday classes, one-day workshops and summer courses extends learning opportunities. A small number of projects in community venues attract new learners.

119. Learners receive adequate pre-course information and guidance. However, some of the course leaflets do not adequately highlight the cost of course materials, and some information is not accurate. Effective, discrete support is available from tutors in classes, and a small number of learners receive individual support.

120. Teaching and learning is unsatisfactory in a significant number of lessons. Tutors use an ineffective range of teaching and learning strategies to meet the needs of all learners. Learners' design and creative skills are insufficiently well developed and the most able and experienced learners are not always appropriately challenged. Some of the lesson plans only identify learners' activities rather than learning outcomes. In many sessions there is insufficient use of group critique and tutors do not encourage learners to share learning or critically evaluate their own work. There is insufficient contextualisation of learning. In better lessons, tutors demonstrate their skills and expertise to encourage and inspire learners. In the best lessons, learners are effectively challenged and the pace of learning is good. Learners confidently experiment with their new skills and develop good independent learning skills.

121. There is ineffective use of formal assessment procedures to plan and monitor learners' progress. This is identified in the self-assessment report. Learning goals are, in most cases, for the group and do not always appropriately challenge all learners. Personal learning goals are not usually formally identified or recorded. Many tutors do not routinely record

learners' skill levels when they join a course or use this information adequately when planning learning activities. Many tutors do not recognise the value of recording learners' individual learning goals, their starting points and their progress, to encourage independent learning.

Leadership and management

122. Facilities in art and craft are good. Designated accommodation is available at the main centres with stimulating displays of learners' work and achievements. Classrooms have good lighting and are appropriate to accommodate the practical nature of course work. In the sewing rooms for soft furnishings, garment making, needlecraft and patchwork quilting, there are large cutting tables and spacious working surfaces. Sewing equipment meets current industrial standards. Sewing rooms also include mirrors and fitting rooms. Pottery rooms are purpose-built and have kiln rooms and storage facilities to protect learners work while it is drying out. All art rooms have sinks and most have storage facilities. Equipment is well maintained by effective technician support. Accommodation and facilities for courses at community venues are satisfactory and in some cases very good. Many tutors are practising artists or work professionally in their field. Fifty per cent have a teaching qualification. Tutors benefit from an appropriate range of staff development opportunities. However, equality and diversity training has had little impact on curriculum planning and there are limited examples of cultural diversity within the curriculum.

123. Informal communication between staff and curriculum managers is good. There is regular contact between staff and managers. Staff are well supported by curriculum managers, who have a good understanding of day-to-day issues and classroom practice. A multi-site e-mail and intranet system is regularly used to aid communication and access information. Regular meetings take place between staff and managers. However, these are not routinely recorded.

124. Quality improvement procedures are insufficiently robust. The provider's observation grades are over-generous, and the process has had insufficient impact on raising standards of teaching and learning. Course reviews are insufficiently analytical and do not adequately quality assure courses or lead to improvements. There is insufficient sharing of good practice. Staff are not fully involved in the self-assessment process, nor do they understand quality improvement procedures. There is insufficient target-setting and the monitoring of development plans is not always timely. The self-assessment report identifies some strengths which are no more than normal practice. Some additional weaknesses were identified by inspectors.

English, languages & communications**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other contributory areas Adult and community learning	1,600	3

125. Approximately 1,600 learners are enrolled on English, languages and communications courses. Four per cent are from minority ethnic groups, 36 per cent are men and 5 per cent have a declared disability. The service offers 88 courses in 11 foreign languages, nine courses in EFL, six British Sign Language (BSL) and lip-reading courses and 13 English courses. Approximately two-thirds of the provision is in the evening. Accredited courses include GCSEs, AS and A2 levels in English and French, creative writing at level 3 and BSL at level 1. Six language courses offer accreditation with a certificate in business language competence. Most courses run for two hours a week at 10 venues across the area. Two-thirds of courses last for a full year. The provision is staffed by 48 hourly paid tutors. It is managed by a salaried curriculum leader who has a fractional contract with half a day of support from the half-time curriculum leader for GCSE and A levels.

Strengths

- good use of foreign languages in many lessons
- good use of well-designed resources in many lessons
- good range of programmes
- good support for tutors

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of initial assessment in English and foreign languages
- inadequate course information for foreign languages
- insufficiently rigorous lesson observations in foreign languages and EFL

Achievement and standards

126. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Learners make good progress in creative writing, English literature, lip-reading, BSL and in some foreign language courses. Learners in two of the three AS English courses achieved very high grades in their first module in 2004-05. In nearly all foreign language and EFL courses, learners make satisfactory progress. Pass rates for learners who complete their courses are high on many accredited courses, but too many learners withdraw from courses early. Success rates on nearly all accredited courses are low. Retention rates on some beginners' language courses are improving but remain low.

The quality of provision

127. Tutors use foreign languages very effectively in many courses. In the best lessons, English is seldom heard. Tutors use the foreign language throughout lessons for greetings, social remarks and grammatical explanations, as well as for the specific structures they are teaching. Learners become used to hearing the language spoken at normal speed. They

learn to get the gist of what is being said without worrying about the parts they miss. They develop very good understanding of spoken language and value this highly. In BSL, learners are able to sign throughout a whole lesson without talking. However, excessive use of English impedes learners' progress in a few foreign language classes.

128. Tutors use a range of well-designed resources in many classes. Some use authentic materials from the countries where the language is spoken, including internet resources. Others devise their own material to a very high standard. A tutor of Arabic made overhead transparencies in large, clear script and accompanying handouts with individual letters missed out to teach writing. Others use cartoons and pictures to stimulate speaking, without resorting to print or translation. Some tutors of English, creative writing and EFL use materials imaginatively to stimulate language development. However, in weaker lessons, foreign language tutors rely too heavily on a course book and accompanying tape. Others do not plan for a variety of activities and language games to keep learners' interest or use drilling, pair and small group work sufficiently to develop learners' skills. Many English and EFL classes do not have a structured approach to meeting the different needs of learners.

129. The service offers a good range of programmes. Eleven languages are currently taught at 10 different sites. Less commonly available languages such as Dutch, Czech, Thai, Mandarin Chinese and Portuguese are provided when there is enough demand. Learners can progress from entry level to level 3 in French, Spanish and German. They are able to choose between accredited and non-accredited courses and value this choice. EFL learners have access to four levels of courses. English courses allow learners to progress from GCSE to A2 level. Learners are also able to take separate AS and A2 level courses in English language and English literature. Tutors organise a small range of enrichment activities such as trips abroad to practise foreign languages. Learners on English courses enjoy visits to the settings of literary texts and to relevant theatre productions or film showings. EFL learners value additional conversation practice provided by trainee tutors. The service's policy of flexible entry to EFL courses allows learners to join throughout the year. However, there is no formal structure to support new learners. This limits the tutors' ability to plan effectively and impedes learners' progress.

130. Initial assessment is not used sufficiently in foreign languages to establish the learners' starting points in order to measure their progress. Tutors use a variety of different ways to record progress over time, but no common format is used and some keep few records. Learners on English GCSE and AS and A2 level courses do not have an initial assessment before joining courses. EFL entry tests do not diagnose individual needs sufficiently for tutors to meet these needs adequately.

131. Course information for foreign languages is inadequate. Course titles are not clear and the brief explanation given in the prospectus does not give learners information on the skills needed at each level. Where leaflets do identify the grammatical knowledge needed and the skills to be covered, there is insufficient guidance about accuracy or fluency. A useful booklet containing more detail is available but most learners are not aware of this. However, potential learners who telephone curriculum leaders receive detailed guidance on the right course for them.

Leadership and management

132. Managers communicate frequently with tutors and provide good support. Tutors receive information about staff development events, useful websites, free exhibitions and events by e-mail or post. Tutors are paid to attend termly meetings, which are generally well attended. Most meetings have a training and development element. Tutors have ready access by telephone to managers for advice on teaching matters.

133. Foreign language tutors are mostly native speakers and many have specialist language teaching qualifications. Accommodation is generally satisfactory, but a few teaching rooms have poor acoustics or heating problems. Some courses are held in schools where chairs remain standing on unoccupied tables during lessons. Many EFL courses take place in inappropriate craft rooms.

134. Managers make good use of data for quality improvement, particularly for improving retention. Tutors' course evaluations are used in the self-assessment report and staff development plans. However, the curriculum area has limited management capacity to effect improvements. Lesson observations are infrequent. Observations of foreign languages and EFL are insufficiently rigorous and do not focus enough on learning. Grades are over-generous. The self-assessment report overstates some strengths and is over-generously graded.

Foundation programmes

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL Adult and community learning	520	3 3
Literacy and numeracy Adult and community learning	467	3 3
Independent living and leisure skills Adult and community learning	167	4 4

135. Foundation programmes include literacy and numeracy, family literacy and numeracy, and discrete learning support provided in a range of activities. Since September 2004, 467 learners have enrolled in literacy and numeracy. At the time of inspection there were 30 classes running in literacy and numeracy, and provision is mainly located in two main centres and three evening centres. Programmes are developed to meet learners' needs including stand-alone sessions where learners' develop their own skills, family schemes, helping parents/carers support their children's learning, and workplace basic skills. All provision is accredited.

136. Around 520 adults, mainly women, have enrolled on ESOL lessons so far this year, and MACLS expects a further 100 learners to enrol by the end of June. In 2003-04, 577 people enrolled. Courses are not a fixed length, but last until learners achieve their learning objectives. Most learners take two or three lessons a week. All lessons last two hours and run for 31 weeks a year, in school term times. Classes are offered at different levels, and some focus specifically on speaking and listening, or on reading and writing. Most lessons take place at the Rochester and Gillingham sites, but some are offered in smaller community venues in the local area. Lessons are also available twice a week at a local fruit packing factory, so the workers can attend straight after their shift. Learners come from diverse backgrounds, including the Far East, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, Africa and eastern Europe. In the past year, many more eastern European migrant workers have enrolled. Five full- and part-time staff take responsibility for different aspects of the provision and report to the curriculum head. A further 33 part-time sessional tutors do most of the teaching. All learners are offered the opportunity to gain qualifications. Last year 136 learners took 266 qualifications, and passed 216 of them. MACLS started offering the new skills for life qualifications in September 2004, and since then, 133 learners have taken and passed 252 examinations in reading, writing, or speaking and listening.

137. Programmes are provided for adults with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities and sensory impairment. Some learners also have mental health conditions. There are 167 learners enrolled on these classes, 56 per cent of whom are men and 17 per cent are over the age of 60 years. Many learners attend for more than one course. In the year 2004-05, 75 courses have run, including seven courses for the partially sighted. Classes include drawing and painting, creative crafts, computer studies, 'let's sing', fitness fun, citizenship and cooking. Classes last for two hours a week over a period of nine or 12 weeks. The head of curriculum for literacy and numeracy and a part-time curriculum leader directly manage the provision. There are 16 part-time tutors, most working for two or four hours a week, three teaching assistants and one volunteer who work for two hours a week.

ESOL**Grade 3***Strengths*

- good attainment
- effective planning of learning
- good and accessible range of provision
- good learner support
- very good staff development and team management

Weaknesses

- low attendance in many classes
- disruption to learning by frequent changes in class composition in beginner classes
- insufficient collation and analysis of data to support improvement

Achievement and standards

138. Learners' attainment is good and most learners make significant improvements in their English skills. In the better lessons, they make rapid improvement in all four language skills. Most learners progress to higher-level courses and achieve a succession of learning goals. Nearly half continue their studies the following year, and some progress to vocational courses. Examination pass rates are good and in 2003-04 the overall achievement rate was approximately 80 per cent. Pass rates are increasing and the addition of a spoken examination has further increased exam success for lower-level learners.

139. Attendance is low. In many lessons only half the learners are present and the average attendance rate during inspection was 61 per cent.

The quality of provision

140. Learning is well planned. Tutors follow the national curriculum closely, and in the better lessons often supplement the skills for life resources with their own materials. They use a variety of teaching methods during lessons, for example pair work, individual work and whole-class teaching. In the best lessons, tutors take close account of each learner's level of ability and learning needs, and ensure learners improve their speaking, listening, reading or writing, or all of these skills. Too often, however, tutors do not check learners' understanding, or ensure they remember and can apply what they have been taught. The learners are keen and attentive, and in the better lessons, rapidly improve their fluency, pronunciation, and aural comprehension, and often their reading and writing as well.

141. Most classrooms are spacious, quiet and well ventilated. In a few lessons, however, the rooms are too hot. In these cases, when the windows are opened, learning is adversely affected by the noise from the traffic.

142. The composition of some classes, particularly at entry 1 level, varies greatly from week to week. Low attendance is only one factor in this. In some courses, learning, as well as any sense of group cohesion, is frequently disrupted by the arrival of new learners. Although tutors usually know a day or two beforehand that a new learner will join, these

new learners are often at a lower level and less confident. Although they are made to feel welcome, the constantly changing dynamics of a class affect the learners' progress.

143. The provision is extensive and is readily accessible during term-time. Courses are offered at all levels at the two main centres, both of which are on bus routes and near the railway stations which link the Medway towns. Some evening classes are offered at these centres, and this is particularly useful for recently arrived east European workers. Classes are also held at a local library and in a number of community venues. An arrangement with a local fruit packing factory means that workers can attend lessons straight after their shift.

144. Staff provide good support for learners. Outreach workers develop and maintain good links with community organisations and encourage recruitment. A guidance counsellor meets all the new learners, carries out the induction, assesses the comparability and validity of qualifications gained abroad, and delivers the first part of their initial assessment before referring them to one of two senior teachers for a detailed diagnosis of their abilities and needs. The outreach workers contact learners who leave unexpectedly to offer support or advice which might enable them to return. Financial support includes assistance with childminding costs. MACLS also runs a crèche.

Leadership and management

145. Staff development arrangements are very good. The curriculum head teaches on courses at the local professional development centre, located at MACLS's premises. MACLS also has good links with universities for staff training. Most staff are well qualified. The management of the ESOL team is also good. During the last self-assessment process, managers realised that many staff felt isolated and unsupported, particularly those working at community venues. Managers have dealt with this, and now staff feel well supported. Communication arrangements are good. Tutors set up an internet-based forum, which, as well as aiding communication, is increasingly used to share ideas and learning materials, or for tutors to seek advice from colleagues. Staff are well deployed, and staff cover is arranged quickly and efficiently.

146. The September 2004 self-assessment report identified that tutors do not keep records of learners' achievements or progress. The manager has introduced a comprehensive set of new arrangements for record-keeping and these are now being used, although it is too early to identify the impact on programme planning. Managers introduced the new skills for life qualifications promptly and efficiently in September 2004. The self-assessment of teaching and learning was partly based on a report by consultants and was over-generous in its assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. A small number of observation grades recently given by managers are similar to those given by inspectors.

147. There is insufficient collation and analysis of data to support improvement. Data is not sufficiently used by managers to understand the scale and nature of difficulties or successes. Managers are not clear, for instance, about the proportion of learners who achieve their learning goals, why only a quarter of learners take national qualifications, or whether attendance rates are improving or declining.

Literacy and numeracy**Grade 3***Strengths*

- good and responsive range of provision
- good support and guidance for learners
- effective staff development opportunities

Weaknesses

- ineffective system for monitoring progression and achievement

Achievement and standards

148. All learners have the opportunity to take a qualification and 47 per cent of learners who achieved the national test in literacy have progressed to the next level. In numeracy, 56 per cent of learners who achieved the national test have progressed. Learners gain confidence in achieving their individual goals. Many learners effectively develop literacy and numeracy skills and participate in learning activities which help develop their autonomy and self-esteem. They appreciate the support and encouragement they receive from tutors, learning support assistants and volunteers in what is often their first contact with formal education since leaving school.

149. Learners' work is well presented and some learners have written poems, articles and stories for MACLS's newsletter and adult learners' week.

150. Attendance in lessons has improved and the attendance rate during the inspection was 76 per cent. Non-attendance is now monitored and many learners appreciate this regular contact to keep them motivated.

The quality of provision

151. There is a good and responsive range of provision. Literacy and numeracy programmes are continually expanding to meet the needs of individuals, groups and organisations. A wide range of 'taster' sessions is offered, from pre-entry level and levels 1 and 2 through to GCSE. Other initiatives include provision to meet the needs of local schools to increase the skills of teaching assistants to level 2 qualifications in literacy and numeracy.

152. Tutors provide good support and guidance for learners. They create a supportive learning environment which encourages productive interaction in lessons. In some lessons, good use is made of learning support assistants and volunteers. They effectively plan their work and there is good collaborative work with tutors to enhance learning. For example, in one session, learning support enabled the tutor to provide in depth individual teaching to less confident learners while volunteers worked with those who were able to work more independently. All literacy and numeracy courses are free and there is a policy of a minimum of four and maximum of 10 learners in each session.

153. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and tutors use a variety of activities to engage and motivate learners. Tasks are relevant and contribute towards learners meeting their goals. Standard session plans and schemes of work are well

used and tutor files include a variety of policies, procedures and relevant course and centre information. Schemes of work relate to the specific needs of individual learners and include formal and informal assessment activities. Effective advice and guidance procedures ensure that learners are enrolled on the appropriate programme. Initial assessment and diagnostic testing is thorough and learning styles are identified. This information is effectively used for the individual learning plans and to identify other learning support needs. Specific, measurable targets are negotiated with the learner and relevant long- and short-term goals are identified in individual learning plans. These are reviewed during each lesson and progress is summarised at the end of each term. Good use is made of appropriate learning resources, including a small number of computers.

Leadership and management

154. Staff development is effective and tutors are suitably qualified. Many staff have progressed from working as volunteers to learning support assistants and then onto work as tutors. Of the 19 tutors, 15 have completed literacy and numeracy core curriculum training and all full-time and sessional staff have attended a varied programme of staff training. The new level 2 qualification for learning support assistants has also allowed formal recognition of the contribution of current volunteers. There is a mentoring system for new and inexperienced tutors. Termly staff meetings provide good opportunities to contribute and share good practice, and to discuss the progress of learners.

155. The system for monitoring progression and achievement is ineffective. Although current data is provided, it does not allow progression and achievement to be monitored, and the ability to analyse performance and drive forward improvement is limited.

Independent living and leisure skills

Grade 4

Strengths

- good standard of completed work
- very good communication with outside agencies

Weaknesses

- poor identification of individual learning needs
- inadequate learning support in practical programmes
- insufficient risk assessment in practical sessions

Achievement and standards

156. Learners produce good work in their practical programmes. Portfolios for art and drawing programmes show creativity, bold use of colour and attention to detail. Pottery is made using different techniques. The finished products from needlework and handicrafts show variety and good use of different materials and techniques. The learners who attend handicrafts and DIY have produced uniquely decorated chairs and examples of different woodwork joints. Many learners speak with pleasure of their finished cookery efforts.

157. Retention rates are satisfactory, ranging from 64 per cent to 100 per cent. There are no accredited courses and no monitoring of learning outcomes on non-accredited programmes. Attendance is satisfactory with few unexplained absences.

The quality of provision

158. The programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners. Courses run in two main sites with one class in cookery being held at another location. Steps have been taken to try to improve the range of programmes offered and new courses including 'let's sing' and French have been developed. There are no accredited courses available.

159. Guidance and pastoral support are satisfactory. The initial interview provides a good introduction to the service. All tutors have a good rapport with learners and they respond promptly and effectively to learners' problems.

160. The identification of individual learning needs is poor. The initial assessment and the recording of learners' needs is inconsistent. Learners receive an assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills, but little formalised assessment takes place to identify social or behavioural needs. At the beginning of each course the tutor completes a brief initial assessment, covering aspects of ability relevant to the type of course, such as manual dexterity and ability to follow instructions. This is recorded on the individual learning plan. However, the results are not always used to identify learning outcomes. In many cases the identified learning outcomes are not detailed and are not broken into manageable steps. There is little identification of the need for differentiated teaching and learning materials. Some learners are able readers, but this is not recorded on their documents. In most classes, instructions are given orally with no reinforcement in a different medium.

161. Learning support in practical programmes is inadequate. Only one session has a volunteer learning support assistant. Most classes have 10 learners with widely differing learning difficulties and/or physical disability or sensory impairment. In most classes where carers are present, the tutor relies on them to help deliver the teaching. Learners' progress is delayed because they wait for long periods while the tutor is working with other learners. Tutors report that the lack of teaching support restricts the range of activities chosen. The less able and quiet learners are most affected. Inspectors observed two learners with moderate to severe difficulties spending 40 minutes on a simple repetitive task, until the tutor was able to spend sufficient time with them to enable them to progress.

162. Risk assessment in practical sessions is insufficient. No risk assessments are completed for individual learners. In all but one area, there are generic risk assessments completed for any adult learner using the facility. These do not include the added risks introduced by teaching learners with difficulties in the well-equipped facilities. Some of the facilities have split-level areas which pose added risks for those with poor co-ordination or restricted mobility. Most specialist areas have dangerous substances and electrical equipment which can pose an additional hazard for those with learning difficulties. In one specialist facility the tutor had completed a good group risk assessment. Tutors are aware of the basic health and safety aspects of their vocational area and most reinforce safety rules appropriately in their lessons.

Leadership and management

163. There is very good communication with outside agencies. The management team has frequent and productive communication with a variety of outside agencies. These include professionals such as learning disability community nurses and behavioural therapists, and organisations such as advocacy groups and opportunity centres. They also have good

contact with parents and carers. The manager is a member of the local learning disability partnership. Learners' records contain a large number of e-mails, letters and recorded telephone messages. These ensure that changes in a learner's circumstances are easily communicated and information which is needed to explore individual needs can be checked.

164. Quality improvement procedures are in place, although these are not rigorously applied and there are currently too many inconsistencies in the completion of documents. Lesson observations have not identified the lack of differentiation in teaching and learning materials or the setting of general learning outcomes. The self-assessment report combines two areas of learning, is insufficiently detailed and does not focus on the learners' experience. None of the strengths or weaknesses identified by inspectors is identified in the self-assessment report. The manager has worked hard to ensure that literacy and numeracy are established in all programmes and steps have been taken to introduce a basic skills tutor into all lessons at regular intervals. It is too early to judge the impact of these changes.

165. Equality of opportunity is not promoted in most teaching and learning materials. Information on equality of opportunity and issues around complaints is not available in a format accessible to most of the learners. However, all learners have a good working relationship with the managers of the provision and they have no difficulty in discussing concerns with them.

Family learning**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	586	3

166. Family Learning is offered as a first step into learning and is a priority area for the adult and community learning service. Currently, 586 learners attend a range of family learning courses. At the time of inspection, 19 wider family non-accredited sessions and five family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) accredited courses are offered. Wider family learning includes computing, first aid, cooking lunch with your toddler, family sign language, learning to swim for parents and children, and building self-esteem. Two sessions a week are structured playbox drop-in sessions for parents/carers and children. FLLN courses such as 'keeping up with children' and ESOL for families are offered. Thirty-five tutors deliver the courses in a range of schools, adult centres and community venues. The courses range from six hours to 72 hours, most of which are daytime courses with some Saturday sessions. Twelve courses are for parents and children to work together. Most wider family learning courses are free, as are the crèche facilities. Partnerships with a range of community agencies support the programmes.

Strengths

- good development of personal skills
- effective partnerships support widening participation

Weaknesses

- inappropriate targets for recruitment
- inadequate management information

Achievement and standards

167. Learners develop good personal skills, self-confidence and self-esteem. They are well motivated and enthusiastic about their learning programmes and the skills they are developing. Programmes encourage learners who may have had poor experiences of education in the past to take part in appropriate courses. Parents and carers in family learning activities improve their own learning and skills. Learners achieve a better understanding of their children's needs and how to support them at school. Parents/carers gain insights into how learning can be made fun and part of family life, such as how numeracy skills can be developed through an understanding and reflection on using fractions when dividing food portions. Children using the structured play sessions develop good social skills and these sessions provide a supportive environment for parents and children to work together. Keeping up with the children courses enable parents and carers to understand their children's learning at different stages of their schooling. Learners on the family learning programmes have the opportunity for accreditation. Learners are encouraged to progress to mainstream courses. One learner recently won a regional award for her progression from being on a family learning course to a classroom assistant and school governor.

168. In 2003-04, 742 learners attended wider family learning courses. The retention rate was very good at 97 per cent and the achievement rate was 66 per cent. Eighty-six learners attended FLLN courses, of whom 62 were new learners. The overall retention rate was excellent at 97 per cent. Thirty-nine learners achieved national test accreditation. Five learners achieved at levels 1 and 2 in literacy, and four learners achieved at level 1 and 2 in numeracy. At the time of the inspection, the attendance rate was very good at 89 per cent.

The quality of provision

169. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. In the better sessions, tutors plan sessions well, building on learners' prior knowledge and skills and encouraging participation in the sessions. Learning materials and handouts are well presented. At the start of the programmes, learners complete an agreement and identify their expected learning outcomes. Individual learning plans are used in the longer family learning courses. Tutors provide individual tuition and support during practical learning sessions. The wider family learning courses that are offered in a number of areas of learning, give parents, grandparents and carers good opportunities to work together, influence their child's learning and form better relationships. In some of the drop-in sessions designed for adults to work and play alongside their children, there is insufficient focus on supporting the needs of adults to support their children's learning.

170. The range of courses is planned to meet learners' needs and interests and to attract new learners to the service. Many courses are free and offer crèche facilities. For example, an ESOL course for Asian women is held in a large hall with the crèche in the same room. Easter and summer fun schools provide easily accessible short courses to attract new learners. A healthy living course for Asian men is planned to attract hard-to-reach learners. There is effective collaboration with a range of organisations and outreach work and a number of new initiatives have been introduced including visits to potential learners at the women's refuge and a course for teenage parents. Short courses in first aid for children are popular as well as parenting courses.

171. Initial guidance and advice is provided mainly by curriculum managers. In outreach centres such as schools, parents are informed about courses at the school premises. At induction, learners are provided with information about the service, support available and a learner handbook. The self-assessment report identifies that guidance for progression opportunities is insufficient. To deal with this, an independent careers guidance worker now attends the session at the end of each course to advise learners on progression routes. Each learner completes a 'next steps' questionnaire and these are evaluated for future planning.

Leadership and management

172. Effective partnerships support widening participation and capacity building. The adult and community learning service works closely with a range of organisations including the voluntary sector, family welfare associations, Sure Start, and primary and secondary schools and to develop family learning. The family welfare association, based on a housing estate, offers a supportive learning centre for adults while the children are cared for in the crèche. The courses in local areas provide learning opportunities for families who would not travel to a main adult learning centre. Taster sessions in arts and crafts, such as a family fun day at a local castle, are planned in association with the pre-school alliance. These encourage wider participation by families. A network of partner organisations, led by the curriculum

co-ordinator for this area meets quarterly to plan activities.

173. Accommodation is generally suitable and most staff are teacher trained or are working towards the qualification. However, not all staff have training in working with young children and the new legislative requirements covering children and young people have not yet been included in staff training. The self-assessment report partly recognises this need. Accommodation is suitable for purpose and resources are appropriate for learners. Many tutors provide resources of their own and take them to a variety of sites. Risk assessments are carried out when using new premises and tutors.

174. Insufficient systems are in place to manage improvements and monitor progression. The self-assessment reports recognises the need for more sophisticated monitoring data for family learning. The current data provides information on numbers of learners, age range, gender, disability, ward, postcode and ethnic group. However, systems to manage information about learners' progression and achievement is not easily available. The service operates a three-year cycle of classroom observations. This allows for only three observations within family learning for the current year. There are limited opportunities for tutors to share good practice, although tutor meetings are held on a regular basis and some professional activities are offered. Peer observations are encouraged but the sharing of learning materials is not systematically organised.

175. Inappropriate target-setting leads to a large number of courses being cancelled. In the current year, 32 per cent of courses were cancelled because of low enrolment numbers and the figure was similar for the last year. Targets set by the LSC for recruitment of men and minority ethnic groups were not met. However, targets for overall total numbers of learners were met.

176. The family learning programme is jointly managed by skills for life managers and a curriculum leader for the wider family learning programme. The area has recently become one of the responsibilities of the newly appointed deputy strategic manager. End-of-course evaluations by learners and tutors are used for planning and to make improvements. Many tutors are part time, and e-mail links and newsletters are effective in communicating with them. The self-assessment report was jointly written and provided an accurate overview of the provision.

