REINSPECTION REPORT

Merton Adult Education Reinspection

25 November 2005

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

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

REINSPECTION REPORT

Merton Adult Education Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Merton Adult Education (MAE) is part of the London Borough of Merton. It is contracted by the London South Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide adult and community learning services to urban communities throughout the borough. Since the previous inspection in October 2004, the borough has been reorganised and MAE now forms part of the community and housing department. MAE is a direct provider of adult and community learning, funded through the LSC, by learners' fees, and from a range of other funds from local and national agencies. The provision includes non-accredited and accredited programmes.

2. MAE is managed by the head of service, who reports directly to the director of the community and housing department and works with six senior managers to plan and deliver the provision. The senior management team includes the head of service, two curriculum managers, the student services manager, the management information system officer, the finance manager, and the office manager. The post of deputy principal is currently not filled. They manage some 200 staff, including 14 programme managers, three senior tutors and 149 tutors.

3. Merton is an outer London borough in the south of London, which is a mix of affluent areas and pockets of high deprivation and social exclusion. Ten per cent of the local workforce have no qualifications and more than 20 per cent have poor literacy and numeracy skills. Almost 80 per cent of the workforce are employed in service industries and there is an identified need for more workers in the construction industry, especially in the run up to the London Olympics. According to the 2001 census, 25 per cent of the borough's population are from minority ethnic groups, compared with 9.1 per cent nationally. In Merton, the make-up of the minority ethnic groups is particularly diverse. A recent council survey indicated that 160 different languages are spoken by pupils in its schools.

4. Most courses take place at MAE's five main centres, with a significant number at its main college site in the west of the borough. Since the previous inspection, there has been an increase in the number of community venues including five new ones in the east of the borough. Courses range from one-day workshops and tasters to programmes lasting two academic years. In 2004-05, there were 6,094 enrolments and 4,440 learners. There are currently 3,344 learners on programme, of whom 22.3 per cent are men and 34 per cent are from minority ethnic groups.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

5. During 2004-05, 358 learners enrolled on 54 courses in information and communications technology (ICT). In 2005-06, 281 learners have enrolled so far on 34

courses. Of these, 58 per cent are new learners. One learner has declared a disability, 26 per cent are men and 24 per cent are from a minority ethnic group. At the time of the inspection, 211 learners are enrolled on 20 courses. Of these, 35 per cent are on accredited programmes. Courses range from level 1 to level 3 and last for between two and 60 weeks. There are no learners enrolled on the entry level programme as it did not recruit, but it is to be offered again in January 2006. The adult and community learning provision includes computing for absolute beginners, follow-on computing, silver surfers, back-to-basics word processing, computing and publishing for Christmas, computer maintenance, introductory courses on digital cameras and digital imaging, and web construction and using a scanner. Two of these are basic-level courses offered as first-step provision. There are accredited courses in word processing, spreadsheets, databases, graphs and charts at levels 1, 2 and 3.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

6. MAE offers programmes in hospitality, sport and leisure. Most of the provision is non-accredited. There are courses in yoga, tai chi, wine appreciation and healthy eating, and an accredited course in food hygiene. Programmes are offered at five learning venues, including the main college site and community venues. Most courses are run in 10-week blocks over the academic year, during daytime, twilight and evenings. A small amount of provision is also available at weekends during the daytime. At the previous inspection there were 264 learners. The total number of learners during 2004-05 was 287, and since the start of September 2005, 199 learners have enrolled on 15 courses, 36 of them on accredited courses. Seventy-four of the learners are new to MAE. Eighty-one per cent of learners are women and 15 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Twelve per cent are over 65 years of age, and just over 2 per cent have declared a disability. There are seven part-time teaching staff, working between two and eight hours a week. Two part-time programme managers have responsibility for the curriculum area and two other areas of learning.

Foundation programmes

7. MAE offers 112 foundation courses, including 41 in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), 18 in literacy and numeracy and 53 in independent living and leisure skills. Most courses are run during the day. Currently there are 590 learners on foundation courses. The 241 ESOL learners mostly attend two or three sessions a week in 10-week blocks. The 234 independent living and leisure skills learners mostly attend one session a week over 30 weeks, and 115 literacy and numeracy learners mostly attend one session a week in 10-week blocks. Most courses are accredited.

8. Currently, 65 per cent of the learners are women, 58 per cent are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 30 per cent have a declared disability. Fifty-five per cent are aged between 25 and 44.

9. The area is managed by the full-time curriculum manager who is supported by four programme managers, two of whom are job-share appointments, and a senior tutor for ESOL programmes. Teaching duties are shared by part-time staff, including 20 ESOL tutors, 12 literacy and numeracy tutors and 18 independent living and leisure skills tutors.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	30
Number of learners interviewed	206
Number of staff interviewed	89
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	29
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	4
Number of visits	1

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

10. At the previous inspection, leadership and management were unsatisfactory as was MAE's approach to equality of opportunity. The arrangements for quality assurance were very weak. The provision in visual and performing arts and media was good, and in English, languages and communications it was satisfactory. Provision in ICT and hospitality, sport, leisure and travel was unsatisfactory. Foundation programmes were very weak. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were judged satisfactory or better. Visual and performing arts and media and English, languages and communication were not reinspected.

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Information & communications technology		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Using IT		
- Adult and community learning	242	4

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Leisure, sport and recreation - Adult and community learning	264	4

Visual & performing arts & media		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Arts - Adult and community learning	374	2
Crafts - Adult and community learning	316	3

English, languages & communications		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Languages - Adult and community learning	811	3

Foundation programmes		5
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL - Adult and community learning	357	5
Literacy and numeracy - Adult and community learning	87	4
Independent living and leisure skills - Adult and community learning	250	4

Grades awarded at reinspection

Leadership and management	2
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	3

Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Using IT - Adult and community learning	211	3

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Leisure, sport and recreation - Adult and community learning	199	3

Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL - Adult and community learning	241	3
Literacy and numeracy - Adult and community learning	115	2
Independent living and leisure skills - Adult and community learning	234	2

KEY FINDINGS
Achievement and standards

11. **Learners acquire good skills on hospitality, sport and leisure, and foundation programmes.** In sport and leisure, the new skills and increased confidence have enabled learners to change their lifestyle and increase their social activity. ESOL learners become confident and more accurate speakers. They improve their understanding of grammar and develop their vocabulary and spelling skills well. They can sustain their new knowledge and become better communicators in everyday life. Literacy and numeracy learners demonstrate improved self-confidence and are able to carry out calculations or complete written text at an appropriate level. Learners on independent living and leisure skills programmes develop good personal and social skills.

12. **Achievement rates on ESOL programmes are poor.** In 2004-05, 51 per cent of learners gained a qualification.

Quality of education and training

13. **In ICT, the recording and monitoring of learners' progress was a weakness at the previous inspection but is now good.** Tutors have had training and managers have produced clear guidelines on the use of individual learning plans.

14. The provider has taken **good actions to improve teaching and learning in ICT.** The standard of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection. Overall, 60 per cent of the teaching sessions observed by inspectors were good or better and none was unsatisfactory. Tutors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and many put a lot of effort into preparing their sessions.

15. **Teaching and learning are good in sport and recreation, literacy and numeracy, and independent living and leisure skills.** In sport and recreation, most of the observed sessions were good and none was unsatisfactory. Tutors use a range of methods to continually motivate learners. In most classes they provide alternative activities or modifications. There is good correction of technique and posture in the physically active courses. Learners are sufficiently challenged. On literacy, numeracy, and independent living and leisure skills courses, sessions are well planned, and suitable resources are identified and made available. Learners are made aware of the aims and objectives at the start of sessions. Independent living and leisure skills tutors create a supportive atmosphere in their sessions. They ensure that the content is taught at a level that is suitable for all learners and enables them to make appropriate progress. Tutors use many activities to engage learners and make learning fun. There is very good management of challenging behaviour in all sessions in the independent living and leisure department.

16. **In the evenings and at weekends there is no technical support for ICT programmes** in the event of software or hardware malfunction.

17. **In sport and recreation, there is insufficient assessment and monitoring of individual learners' progress.** Tutors are unclear about how to assess and monitor learners' progress. The poor levels of assessment that were identified at the previous inspection are still a weakness. New paperwork has been developed for use with learners, and it is fit for purpose, but most tutors are unsure how to use it effectively. Tutors rarely record learners' progress towards their aims, and they give learners little feedback.

18. **There are few sport and recreational programmes designed to attract disadvantaged learners.** MAE has very few partnerships with local and national organisations. There are not enough community links and venues, and too few programmes are specifically targeted at deprived areas. The range of courses to attract learners from under-represented groups is narrow.

19. **There is insufficient use of information learning technology (ILT) in foundation programmes.** Most tutors have attended training on the use of ILT, and some are now confident about using ILT with their learners. However, learners are not given sufficient

access to the available equipment and materials.

Leadership and management

20. **MAE has strong leadership and good curriculum management.** The borough has restructured the management of services to align the adult education service more closely with the community. The head of service has effectively changed MAE's focus and built a collaborative team approach to aspects of management. External consultants have been used effectively to develop and train management teams. Senior managers work effectively with programme managers in a number of new, well-structured management subgroups to plan and develop the service.

21. The provider is taking **good measures to widen participation in adult education by members of under-represented groups.** It has a three-year strategy for widening adult participation, which has key strategic objectives covering prioritisation, proposed actions and resourcing. MAE has targets to increase the number of men in learning, learners from particular postcodes and learners from minority ethnic groups. It has a deliberate policy of targeting people who live in the eight areas of greatest deprivation, which are all in the east of the borough.

22. **In sport and recreation, the provider's measures to improve the quality of provision are particularly effective.** The post-inspection action plan adequately considered issues identified at the previous inspection, and the observation of teaching and learning is improving standards. All teaching staff have been observed and areas for improvement have been identified. There has been some staff development and more is planned. Evaluations are being used well. The paperwork used with learners is good and staff have been appropriately consulted about it. Good practices are being identified and shared.

23. **The promotion of equality and diversity is good.** The provider has run an effective programme of equality and diversity training, and staff awareness is now good. MAE has an equality and diversity subgroup with members drawn from managers and staff. Equality and diversity is now a high-profile agenda item in all meetings and is a consideration in curriculum design. Observers of teaching and learning check that teaching aids, coursework and handouts are appropriately culturally diverse. The tutors' handbook now includes a comprehensive checklist to help tutors promote equality and diversity in their sessions. MAE has further promoted equality and diversity through its successful leadership of the borough's 'Black History Month' this year.

24. The monitoring of aspects of quality assurance is insufficiently clear. Managers and senior tutors have work plans that show what actions they are taking against key service objectives, but they are not an integral part of the overall quality improvement strategy. Monitoring dates in one strategy do not correlate with review dates in others. Some quality checks are too informal. It is unclear how individual aspects of the quality improvement strategy will be monitored.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- strong leadership and good curriculum management
- good measures to widen participation
- good promotion of equality and diversity

Weaknesses

- insufficient clarity in monitoring aspects of quality assurance

Information & communications technology

Using IT

Strengths

- good recording and monitoring of learners' progress
- good actions to improve teaching and learning
- good management of the curriculum

Weaknesses

- insufficient technical support in the evenings and at weekends

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Leisure, sport and recreation

Strengths

- good acquisition of new skills and confidence by learners
- good teaching and learning
- particularly effective measures to improve the quality of provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment and monitoring of individual learners' progress
- too few programmes to attract disadvantaged learners

Foundation programmes

ESOL

Strengths

- good development of language skills
- good curriculum management

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- insufficient use of ILT

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- good development of skills
- much good teaching and learning
- good curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of ILT

Independent living and leisure skills

Strengths

- good development of personal and social skills
- much good teaching and learning
- good curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of ILT

Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

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

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

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

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

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

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDING

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT   Grade 2

Strengths

- strong leadership and good curriculum management
- good measures to widen participation
- good promotion of equality and diversity

Weaknesses

- insufficient clarity in monitoring aspects of quality assurance

25. MAE has strong leadership and its curriculum management is good. The borough council has restructured the management of services and aligned the adult education service more closely to the community by placing it in the community and housing department. Since the previous inspection, the head of service has effectively changed MAE's focus and built a collaborative team approach to aspects of management. External consultants have been used effectively to develop and train management teams. Communications are good. Senior managers work effectively with programme managers in a number of new, well-structured management subgroups to plan and develop the service. Managers have a stronger and clearer vision for the way the curriculum is planned. Tutors have received good training in how to complete the new paperwork. A helpful new handbook for tutors is providing explicit and detailed information about self-review of teaching and learning, as well very clear information about the effect on funding of poor retention and achievement rates.

26. MAE has effectively used good research about the local community to shift the focus of the curriculum offer and increase participation in learning in areas where traditionally learners have not taken part. For example, taster courses offered during Adult Learners Week were targeted in an area highlighted in the community survey as having low participation in learning. Recruitment from that area is already exceeding the numbers for the whole of 2004-05. The service has changed the courses on offer in sport and recreation to avoid replicating those provided by the leisure services department. Plans exist to develop different activities in community venues, but few courses are currently running.

27. Target-setting was a weakness at the previous inspection, but is now used effectively to monitor curriculum development. The management information system manager is now a member of the senior management team. Data is now produced to monitor provision and discover trends. The management information system manager has produced a helpful three-year target strategy to show other managers whether targets set for recruitment, retention and achievement, and equality and diversity have been achieved.

28. Resources are satisfactory overall. Most accommodation and equipment is fit for purpose. The main site is welcoming, bright, and provides good classroom accommodation. There are some shortcomings in ICT resources. MAE does not provide sufficient ICT support at evenings and weekends, and ESOL staff do not make enough use of ILT.

29. Staff development is satisfactory. MAE uses the borough council's system of annual appraisals and six-monthly reviews to adequately set individual targets and identify training needs. MAE has improved the contractual arrangements for its part-time tutors. A number of days and times were arranged for the training connected with the post-inspection action plan to enable part-time staff to attend.

30. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory overall. Visual and performing arts and media, one of the two largest areas of learning, has significantly increased the success rate for accredited provision from 17 per cent in 2003-04 to nearly 51 per cent in 2004-05, in line with national averages. ESOL, another large part of the provision, had poor achievement rates, at 51 per cent in 2004-05. Other areas such as ICT have recently improved their success rates.

Equality of opportunity   Contributory grade 2

31. The provider is taking good actions to widen participation in adult education by members of under-represented groups. It has a three-year strategy for widening adult participation, which has key strategic objectives covering prioritisation, proposed actions and resourcing. MAE has targets to increase the number of men in learning, learners from particular postcodes, and learners from minority ethnic groups. It has a deliberate policy of targeting people who live in the eight areas of greatest deprivation, which are all in the east of the borough. Participation from these areas increased significantly from 13 per cent of total learners in 2003-04 to 19.5 per cent in 2004-05. It currently stands at 16.4 per cent. The service's outreach and research worker makes direct contact with community groups to ascertain their educational needs. She reports her findings to the curriculum development subgroup. MAE has conducted a postal survey focused on these areas to assess the level and nature of demand for courses. As an incentive to respond, returned questionnaires were entered into a prize draw. The provider ran well-attended taster courses during Adult Learners Week in five new community venues in the target areas. It is too early to judge the full effect of this activity on the enrolment of new learners on to longer courses. As identified at the previous inspection, MAE still has no community learning or development programmes. These programmes are left to the voluntary sector and monitored through the Merton Adult Learning Partnership. To attract men into learning, MAE has provided taster courses on Saturdays and contacted fathers through schools involved in family learning programmes. The percentage of male learners is slightly higher than at the previous inspection. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups, excluding those on specific courses for non-English speakers, has increased by 9 per cent, and is now comparable with the proportion in the local population. The provider has an effective management information system, which it uses to monitor enrolment, retention and achievement rates

by learners' ethnicity, gender, age and postcode.

32. The promotion of equality and diversity was a weakness at the previous inspection but is now good. Since then, the provider has run an effective programme of equality and diversity training, and the staff now have a good awareness of equality and diversity issues. MAE has an equality and diversity subgroup which is represented in a departmental group, which in turn is represented in the council's corporate equality and diversity group. Equality and diversity is now a high-profile agenda item in all meetings and is considered in curriculum design. Observers of teaching and learning are required to check that teaching aids, coursework and handouts are appropriately culturally diverse. The new handbook for tutors includes a comprehensive checklist to help tutors promote equality and diversity in their sessions. MAE's posters, brochures and other publications successfully promote equality and diversity through positive imagery. They show the wide diversity of its learners in terms of ethnicity, age and gender. Prospectuses and learner handbooks include details of how learners can obtain versions in community languages. Courses are now available in two community languages, Arabic and Polish, whereas at the previous inspection there were none. MAE further promoted equality and diversity through its successful leadership of the borough's 'Black History Month' this year. The events, which were open to all, were conducted in partnership with a number of minority ethnic groups in the borough.

33. The provider has satisfactory strategies for managing literacy, numeracy and language support and additional learning support. The skills for life co-ordinator is responsible for the management of support in all areas of learning. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. In three of the areas of learning the provider is running a pilot project in which the national skills for life curriculum is cross-referenced to the main course objectives, and course tutors provide the necessary support in literacy and numeracy. The availability of support on these courses is well advertised in the provider's course publicity material. The student services manager is responsible for managing additional learning support, and this is satisfactory. The service employs two signers who assist hearing impaired learners in the classroom and also support hearing-impaired tutors at staff conferences and other events. Other learning support assistants are available from a pool of volunteers as required. An external consultant has identified as good practice the service's procedures for encouraging disclosure of, and maintaining confidentiality about, additional learning support needs.

34. Some of the premises used by MAE are still not fully compliant with disability discrimination legislation. However, the provider displays large posters throughout its premises, which offer to move classes to alternative locations if learners with mobility problems cannot reach the planned rooms. There are also leaflets which explain which venues do not have toilet facilities for users with disabilities, and which have upper floors that are only accessible by stairs.

Quality assurance   Contributory grade 3

35. Since the previous inspection, MAE has put in place a number of good measures to improve aspects of the service. The responsibility for monitoring quality remains with the head of service. The key post of deputy with responsibility for quality has been identified but not yet filled. Senior managers have produced a number of good strategies and devised various methods of target-setting and monitoring aspects of the service. The head of service has produced an overall quality improvement strategy that clearly describes a number of key activities to quality assure aspects of the service. Observations of teaching and learning are effectively improving tutors' work. Tutors self-assess their teaching using the very clear guidance in the tutors' handbook. Observers give written feedback that is detailed, specific and includes actions for improvement with appropriate timescales. Senior managers have introduced a moderation process to the internal observation of teaching and learning, to ensure that the process is thorough. Programme managers have almost completed the new, extensive checks of tutors' paperwork, but the new system to assess and monitor learners' progress on non-accredited provision is still not used well across all provision. MAE's post-inspection action plan was used particularly effectively to improve all aspects of the service. Curriculum management has improved and is now a key strength in all areas of learning.

36. Self-assessment is satisfactory. MAE's self-assessment process is an integral part of quality assurance. Managers produce termly reports based on staff feedback and management information about trends in retention and achievement. MAE's 2004-05 annual self-assessment is not due for completion until January 2006. However, an incomplete report was collated and used by inspectors in those areas that were being reinspected. The report did not include any key overall strengths for leadership and management and many of the strengths identified were no more than normal practice. Some judgements were based on evaluation of evidence gained as a result of the previous inspection. There was too little of MAE's own evaluation of its performance.

37. MAE's collection and use of learners' feedback is satisfactory. Questionnaires are used to monitor the induction process, and a learner forum is used to gather general views about the service. Despite various times and venues, attendance has not been consistently high. The research and outreach officer uses other ways of gaining insight from learners, including e-mails and discussion groups in classes.

38. There is insufficient clarity about how some aspects of quality assurance are monitored. Managers and senior tutors produce regular work plans that show what actions they are taking to achieve key service objectives. The plans include aspects of quality assurance such as observations of teaching and learning and the production of the self-assessment report, but are not an integral part of the overall quality improvement strategy. Monitoring dates in one strategy do not correlate with review dates in others. Quality checklists now exist for different aspects of quality assurance but some are repetitious and others, such as the unannounced visits to classes to check induction, are too formal. It is unclear how individual aspects of the quality improvement strategy will be monitored overall. Managers are beginning to control and plan for the review of systems and procedures, but few of the strategies and quality assurance measures are

dated, or have any version control or authorship.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Using IT ⁻ Adult and community learning	211	3

Using IT

Strengths

- good recording and monitoring of learners' progress
- good actions to improve teaching and learning
- good management of the curriculum

Weaknesses

- insufficient technical support in the evenings and at weekends

Achievement and standards

39. The retention rate was a strength at the previous inspection, and it remains good at 77 per cent. The overall retention rate for accredited and non-accredited courses is 91.2 per cent, an increase from 89.1 per cent in 2004-05. Attendance during the inspection was good at 83 per cent. Tutors regularly follow up unexplained absences, by e-mail, letter or telephone. Success rates on accredited courses have improved from 25 per cent in 2002-03, to 44 per cent in 2003-04 and 57.6 per cent in 2004-05. Twelve learners on a level 1 course also gained level 2 certificates for information technology (IT) users. There is a good standard of work produced in most sessions and learners develop good practical ICT skills. Learners are motivated and enrol on a course for a variety of reasons which relate to their own needs and interests. These are discussed with the tutor at the start of the programme. For example, in one class, learners wanted to develop their own websites using specific features. In others, learners wanted to know how to e-mail friends and family and attach photos they had taken with their digital cameras or images they had scanned.

Quality of education and training

40. The standard of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection, and 60 per cent of teaching sessions observed by inspectors were good or better and none was unsatisfactory. Tutors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and many put a lot of effort into preparing their sessions. In one class the tutor had visited many websites to identify those that would most benefit the learners, and then created a document

containing various hyperlinks interspersed with background information and questions. Most sessions are well planned and structured to allow for a variety of activities, including group work, discussion, practical exercises, and learners' presentations. Tutors make good use of questioning to involve the learners and clarify their needs. Many learners want to apply the knowledge and skills they have gained to their computers at home. Learners regularly discuss the problems they have had with their home computers and the tutor identifies solutions. Tutors are knowledgeable and can demonstrate effectively the various software applications and ICT uses. Learners are well supported during learning sessions. Tutors are quick to identify when they need help and learners also support each other well.

41. In weaker learning sessions, there are too few checks on learning, the pace is slow, and learners spend too long on one activity. In some sessions the tutor did not always notice when a learner needed help, which left them struggling to find a solution themselves. Learners were not always confident enough to ask for help.

42. At the previous inspection, the recording of learners' skills development was a weakness, and there was too little use of individual learning plans. Learners' progress is now recorded and monitored well. Tutors have had staff development, and clear guidelines have been produced on the use of individual learning plans. At the time of the previous inspection, individual learning plans did not contain the results of learners' initial literacy and numeracy assessments. This has now been remedied, and the results are included as well as the dates when learners have achieved particular outcomes. Learning targets are now negotiated with individual learners. Data from the individual learning plans is used to monitor the effectiveness of courses and to plan future staff development.

43. The learning environment is good and the classrooms are large, spacious and well furnished. Learners value the welcoming atmosphere. Hardware and software meet business standards and tutors make good use of modern teaching technology, including data projectors and pointers, when they are giving demonstrations or monitoring learners' progress in class. Learners with restricted mobility have access to a good range of adaptive technology. The previous inspection reported that many tutors did not have the appropriate qualifications to teach higher-level courses. Tutors are now appropriately qualified and all have a teaching qualification or are working towards one. Many have good specialist ICT skills. It was also reported that unit accreditation was not available and learners were expected to complete the full qualification. Unit accreditation is now available.

44. Courses have been introduced to enable learners to widen their general computing knowledge or acquire skills they can use in their daily lives. Entry level and advanced qualifications have been introduced to enable learners to progress through accredited programmes. ICT sessions are held at the main site and at Cobham Court, as well as in the wider community as part of the family learning programme. During the summer, a course aimed at getting learners started in IT was held with one of MAE's partners. In addition, taster courses were held during Adult Learners Week, Family Learning Week and Black History Month which attracted 104 enrolments. Ten learners from these

courses went on to enrol on longer ICT courses. Managers keep abreast of the curriculum offer at other institutions in the area and across the south of England, in order to ensure that MAE's provision meets learners' needs.

45. There is good initial advice and guidance for learners who want to enrol on accredited courses. They receive appropriate levels of support and tutors ensure that they have the necessary information on childcare facilities, the learning support fund and the additional help they may receive to support their learning. Leaflets about the support available are in all the classrooms, on tables in the eating areas, and in the learners' handbook. Many of the rooms have facilities to support learners with visual or hearing impairment. Learners can also use the open access centre, which provides additional help with ICT for learners who do not have computers at home. There are good records on learners and their learning aims, and information is fed back to senior managers. MAE makes good use of resources outside timetabled classes.

46. In the evenings and at weekends there is insufficient technical support. On Monday to Friday, during the daytime, an IT technician is available to provide technical support, and further support is available from the council's main offices if required. At other times, however, there is no technical support available, and in the event of either software or hardware malfunction, tutors and learners must fend for themselves.

Leadership and management

47. Curriculum management is good. Since the previous inspection, when the development of the ICT curriculum was inadequate, many improvements have been made. Market research has been carried out to ascertain the needs and interests of local people and this has been used in developing the curriculum. MAE has introduced a wider range of courses, and targeted under-represented groups, such as men and adults from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of men has increased by 5 per cent, and an additional 1 per cent of learners is now from minority ethnic groups. Quality assurance arrangements have improved since the previous inspection, with managers and tutors now making good use of accurate and regular data reports to make clear decisions about the effectiveness of particular courses. Detailed reviews of the curriculum have been carried out and have fed into course planning. Good actions have been taken to improve teaching and learning. Classroom observations have been carried out on all tutors. After each observation, an action plan is drawn up with clear targets, timescales and success criteria. This is fed into the staff development plan. Staff are using the action points to improve their teaching. There is good mentoring of new tutors, and since the previous inspection there has been an increase in the proportion of good teaching. All staff take an examination-based qualification in IT at advanced level before they teach on the higher-level courses. Internal verification and moderation arrangements remain satisfactory.

48. The self-assessment report makes use of reliable data to judge retention and achievement rates. However, it is not sufficiently self-critical. Strengths are given for ICT but weaknesses are not. Too many of the actions for improvement are taken from the

previous inspection report and do not arise from weaknesses identified by the area of learning's own quality assurance systems.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Leisure, sport and recreation - Adult and community learning	199	3

Leisure, sport and recreation

Strengths

- good acquisition of new skills and confidence by learners
- good teaching and learning
- particularly effective measures to improve the quality of provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment and monitoring of individual learners' progress
- too few programmes to attract disadvantaged learners

Achievement and standards

49. Learners acquire new skills and the confidence to improve their lifestyle. They use the new skills in their daily life, for example, increasing their social activity, and developing and maintaining their health. Many learners enrol to improve their fitness and overcome medical problems. Learners in a yoga class report significant improvements in their suppleness. One learner who suffers from panic attacks, and another with Parkinson's disease attribute mental and physical benefits to the course. Learners report high levels of satisfaction and enjoy taking part in these courses. They value the social benefits of participating in courses.

50. The standard of learners' work is good and they make good progress. Most learners improve their technique and performance, including their posture, sequences and co-ordination. Learners on a beginners tai chi course are demonstrating high levels of attainment.

51. Attendance rates were satisfactory at 82 per cent during the inspection. The pattern of attendance on most courses is satisfactory or better.

52. Retention rates are satisfactory, although they have fallen since the previous inspection. MAE has identified this and is taking appropriate action. At the previous inspection, the retention rate was identified as a strength.

Quality of education and training

53. Teaching and learning are good. Most of the teaching observed was good and none was unsatisfactory. Tutors use a range of methods to maintain learners' motivation. In most classes, tutors provide alternative activities or modifications to activities. They correct learners' technique and posture in the physically active courses, and they challenge learners sufficiently. Tutors show technical competence and plan effectively. They give clear instructions and good demonstrations, reinforced by continued verbal support and guidance. Learners can clearly see what they are expected to do, and their individual needs are being addressed through clear explanations and discussion. Tutors have good relationships with learners. The atmosphere in sessions is supportive. The unsatisfactory teaching and learning identified at the previous inspection is no longer present.

54. Resources are satisfactory for most courses. However, at one community venue, learners do not have appropriate equipment, and the mats provided are too small and are dirty.

55. Support and guidance are satisfactory and learners have easy access to information, advice and guidance which they are satisfactorily aware of. Initial assessment for some learners was poor at the previous inspection. It is now satisfactory. Learners are involved in identifying any additional support needs at the start of their course. Support arrangements for literacy, numeracy and language learners are satisfactory, and a hearing induction loop has been made available for a hearing impaired learner.

56. There is insufficient assessment and monitoring of individual learners' progress, and tutors are not sure how to carry out these tasks. The poor levels of assessment were also identified at the previous inspection. Assessment activities on the accredited courses are satisfactory. New learner paperwork has been developed and is fit for purpose, but most tutors do not know how to use it effectively and it is, in the main, being used inadequately. A few tutors use it satisfactorily, and this is having a positive effect on the learners' experience. Tutors rarely record learners' progress towards their aims, and learners receive little feedback about their progress.

57. There are too few programmes designed to attract disadvantaged learners, and very few partnerships with local and national organisations. However, newly developed collaboration is starting to show signs of potential. There are too few community links and venues. The range of courses to attract under-represented learners is narrow. However, managers are working towards targets and are committed to developing the curriculum. The self-assessment report has identified the shortcomings in this area and action has already been taken to deal with them. This, however, it is in its infancy.

Leadership and management

58. The provider's measures to improve the quality of provision are particularly effective. The post-inspection action plan adequately covers the issues identified at the previous inspection, and much has improved since then. The observation of teaching and learning is driving up standards. All teaching staff have been observed, and areas for improvement have been identified. Staff development has taken place and more is planned. There is good use of evaluations. The new learner paperwork is good and staff have been appropriately consulted about it. Good practices are being identified and shared. Good arrangements have been put in place to make improvements.

59. The self-assessment process is inclusive and makes adequate use of data. The reported weaknesses identified relate mainly to the previous inspection, and most of the strengths are normal practice.

60. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Management and co-ordination of provision are satisfactory. Communication with and support for part-time tutors is adequate. Meetings for part-time staff are satisfactorily attended and those who are unable to attend receive copies of notes and have the opportunity to meet with curriculum managers. The weaknesses in curriculum management identified at the previous inspection have been dealt with.

61. Promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners and staff have an adequate awareness of their rights and responsibilities.

Foundation programmes

Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL		
- Adult and community learning	241	3
Literacy and numeracy		
- Adult and community learning	115	2
Independent living and leisure skills		
- Adult and community learning	234	2

ESOL

Strengths

- good development of language skills
- good curriculum management

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- insufficient use of ILT

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- good development of skills
- much good teaching and learning
- good curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of ILT

Independent living and leisure skills

Strengths

- good development of personal and social skills
- much good teaching and learning
- good curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of ILT

Achievement and standards

62. ESOL learners develop their language skills well. They become confident and more accurate speakers. They improve their understanding of grammar and develop their vocabulary and spelling skills well. They can sustain their new knowledge, and they become better able to communicate in everyday life with doctors, school teachers and neighbours. Learners are able to assess their progress and evaluate what they need to do to improve. In 2004-05, 68 per cent of learners progressed from one level of learning to the next. Some learners produce good project work.

63. Learners on independent living and leisure skills courses develop good personal and social skills. This was identified as a strength at the previous inspection and tutors have since been able to improve it further. Tutors adopt a 'whole-college approach' and manage challenging behaviour at the centres during learning sessions and during breaks. Tutors act as role models for learners, and expect them to behave in an appropriate manner at all times. They emphasise the need to show respect for other people and their views. Learners visit supermarkets, exhibitions and other attractions that add to their social awareness, communication skills and self-confidence. In 2004-05, 73 per cent of the learners who started accredited independent living and leisure skills courses achieved their individual learning goals. The retention rate was 83 per cent. Some independent living and leisure skills learners have been able to progress to other courses, some of which are mainstream. One learner is attending a childcare course at a local college and another is taking part in a mathematics course at level 2.

64. Literacy and numeracy learners develop good skills. They demonstrate improved self-confidence and are able to carry out calculations or write text at an appropriate level. Learners work closely together and support each other in understanding the more complex topics. Most learners attend classes to improve their literacy and/or numeracy skills but some need a qualification in order to gain employment. Learners are positive about their courses and are very motivated. There is good progression for some literacy and numeracy learners. Four learners who achieved accreditation at level 1 during the past year are now on general certificate of secondary education courses, and 47 learners from the same year have progressed to other classes within the department. Additionally, 16 learners have chosen other classes in different areas ranging from early years care to yoga and art.

65. Retention rates are satisfactory overall. On independent living and leisure skills courses the rate is good at 83 per cent. However, in ESOL the rate is only 63 per cent. Many ESOL learners leave programmes during the last term of their 30-week programmes. Retention rates on literacy and numeracy programmes fell from 85 per cent to 73 per cent when the provision changed from short to 30-week courses.

66. The attendance rate during the inspection was satisfactory at 68 per cent on ESOL courses, 74 per cent on independent living and leisure skills courses and 66 per cent on literacy and numeracy programmes.

67. Success rates are satisfactory at 73.5 per cent on independent living and leisure skills and 63 per cent on literacy and numeracy programmes. However, on ESOL programmes success rates are poor at 51 per cent for 2004-05.

Quality of education and training

68. There is good teaching on literacy, numeracy and independent living and leisure skills courses. Sessions are planned well and suitable resources are identified and made available. Learners are made aware of the aims and objectives at the start of sessions. Independent living and leisure skills tutors create a supportive atmosphere in learning sessions while ensuring that the content is taught at a level that is suitable for all learners and enables them to make appropriate progress. Tutors use many activities to interest learners and make learning fun. There is very good management of challenging behaviour. In a session where one learner was irritating another, the tutor simply changed seats with the learner, defusing the situation quickly with minimal disruption to the session. Literacy and numeracy tutors use a range of activities and pace their sessions suitably, with frequent questioning to test learners' understanding, and opportunities for learners to ask questions and consolidate their learning. In one entry level literacy session a learner was required to cut out pre-printed words that contained silent letters and then match them in groups. In a level 1 numeracy session concerned with probability, learners were asked to throw dice and record the results. This improved their level of understanding and enhanced their learning experience. In the weaker independent living and leisure skills sessions, the content and reproduction of some learning materials were poor, and little use was made of materials that learners would be familiar with and that would enhance learning.

69. Teaching and learning on ESOL programmes are satisfactory. Inspectors judged 67 per cent of observed sessions to be good or better, and less than 9 per cent inadequate. In the best sessions, learning is well planned with clear stages and links between sessions, and progress is monitored well. Learning reflects learners' everyday life and their individual needs. In these sessions, tutors provide a good range of activities to stimulate learners and encourage them to practise their speaking and listening skills intensively. Tutors correct errors well, and drill learners thoroughly for intonation patterns and stress on words. Learners are encouraged to self-correct and to work collaboratively. The best tutors use a good range of well-presented materials and make full use of audiovisual aids to assist learning. Most tutors produce good-quality materials such as home-made prompt cards, regalia and skills for life materials. In the weakest sessions, planning is not sufficiently rigorous to take learners through clear stages, and activities are too tutor-centred. Learners do not interact sufficiently and are not given enough opportunities to practise speaking and listening skills. In some sessions, activities are rushed, making it difficult for slower learners to consolidate new knowledge. In other sessions, activities are not sufficiently challenging for faster learners and learners are not given enough space to interact. In one session, latecomers who interrupted learning were not sufficiently challenged.

70. Target-setting for ESOL learners has improved considerably since the previous

inspection. Individual targets are clear and manageable and are well understood by learners. The assessment of individual ESOL learners' progress has also improved significantly with timely tutorials where learners are given a chance to reflect on their work. A new achievement and progression system is now in place.

71. Resources are satisfactory overall. Banks of resources have been deployed in all centres and access to ILT has improved. Accommodation is satisfactory, and there is access for learners with limited mobility. There is adequate audiovisual equipment and there are some good displays of ESOL learners' work. Many community classes are held in modern centres with suitable classrooms and access to a range of resources to support tutors and learners. A minority of centres are poorly decorated and have poor resources. Access to ILT varies according to which centre learners attend. Learners have the opportunity to work in well-equipped, dedicated workshops such as the teaching kitchen and the pottery workshop.

72. Programmes reflect local needs. Plans are in place to expand ESOL evening courses, work-based courses and family courses and to make literacy, numeracy and language a full part of vocational programmes. ESOL programmes are offered from pre-entry level to level 2 and include fast-track courses. They are run in nine venues. The provider offers a wide range of independent living and leisure skills courses in many community settings to meet local needs. Locations are chosen to meet the needs of specific communities. They have good transport links, and the resources needed to provide good courses to learners who have learning difficulties and disabilities. Courses include popular culture, money management, pottery, tai chi, using computers, independent living, cookery, and literacy and numeracy. Learners are able to choose the courses that best suit their individual needs. Tutors offer advice and guidance during the induction period and help learners make suitable choices. Some learners are able to take part in two or three different courses. Some can gain qualifications, or units of qualifications, although in many classes much of the provision is non-accredited. Classes are offered during the morning, afternoon and evening.

73. The main centre for literacy and numeracy courses is the Canons House centre. Courses also take place at six other community settings across the borough. All courses are externally accredited and some learners also gain qualifications in basic IT.

74. Advice, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory on all programmes. Learners are referred appropriately onto courses and receive enough support to enable them to complete them. For example, 11 per cent of ESOL learners benefited from the learner support fund in the autumn term of 2005. All ESOL and literacy and numeracy learners receive effective initial and diagnostic assessments. ESOL tutors give good personal support to learners, helping them with form-filling, and referring isolated learners to the local refugee council for counselling and social activities. One hundred and eighty-one learners on early years, IT and mind and body programmes have had literacy initial assessments since September 2005.

75. There is satisfactory support for learners. Tutors offer a wide range of advice and guidance to learners during all stages of their time on programmes. Tutors have good

relationships with residential home staff and other carers, and respect the dignity of all learners. They demonstrate empathy with learners and are wholly committed to ensuring that learners have the best possible experience of learning. Care workers and volunteers support some sessions. However, this coverage is patchy. The provider has made use of experienced learners acting as volunteer class assistants. Crèches are provided at three venues.

76. Links between family learning and skills for life programmes have improved. A skills for life co-ordinator has been appointed and there are now clearer progression routes.

77. ILT is not sufficiently integrated into learning. Most tutors have attended training on the use of ILT, and some are now confident about using it with their learners. However, learners are not yet given sufficient access to the available equipment and materials.

Leadership and management

78. Curriculum management is good. Managers provide strong leadership and have set targets for improving retention and achievement rates. They communicate well with staff and staff morale is good. Managers support tutors well through regular visits to centres, useful termly meetings and well-focused staff development programmes. Tutors value their training opportunities and are encouraged to share good practice through peer observations and a mentoring system. The tutor handbooks provide useful guidelines. All tutors have been observed and set actions. Managers follow up actions and re-observe tutors when necessary. They ensure that learners' progress is monitored effectively and the quality of assessment is maintained through regular visits and individual meetings with tutors. Managers have maintained and extended partnership work to secure a wide range of well-located programmes in the community and the workplace. The curriculum offer is continuously reviewed and responds well to local needs. Managers use data well to monitor and plan programmes. The promotion of equality and diversity has improved on all programmes. Staff are developing good awareness and managers actively promote diversity.

79. Managers are aware of the need to cater for disadvantaged learners and have invested in a range of adaptive resources to enhance learners' experiences. The teaching kitchen has been equipped with height-adjustable worktops, a variety of ovens and hobs, and talking microwave ovens and weighing scales. Other resources include an interactive whiteboard, height-adjustable desks, large computer keyboards, an electronic enlarger and a hearing loop centre. Tutors emphasise to learners the need to respect others and to pay attention to their individual needs.

80. There is a detailed procedure for the moderation of portfolios of evidence. Moderators give clear feedback that accurately describes any further evidence needed or improvement in the learners' work required to gain accreditation.