

INSPECTION REPORT

Hammersmith and Fulham LEA

10 March 2006



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
- **learnirect** 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.

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*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Hammersmith and Fulham Adult Education Service (the service) is one of the local education authority's lifelong learning services, alongside early years, play, youth, libraries and arts services of Hammersmith and Fulham Council (the council). The adult service is a direct provider of adult education. The service has five main centres that are used primarily for adult education and also uses a range of community based venues. The service is managed by the head of service who reports to the assistant director for lifelong learning. There are eight full-time curriculum managers, although there have been significant long-term staff absences and vacancies, including the curriculum manager post for arts, media and publishing. Many of the larger areas of learning have full and fractional lecturing staff including technicians, and there is an information, advice and guidance worker. The council receives funding from London West Learning and Skills Council. In 2004-05 there were 7,688 learners enrolled on courses. The service provides courses in all areas of learning with the exception of construction. The inspection covered the largest areas of learning.

2. Hammersmith and Fulham is one of the smallest boroughs in London but it has the fourth highest residential density of any local authority in the country. There is great disparity between some of the most prosperous and deprived areas. The unemployment rate in June 2005 is 3.1 per cent, compared with a national average of 2.3 per cent. There is a high level of commuting in and out of the borough with some 70 per cent of jobs filled by non residents. Some 40 per cent of the borough's residents are educated to level 4 while 18 per cent of the population have no qualifications. Some wards have a high concentration of adults with very low literacy and numeracy skills. Twenty-one per cent of the borough's population have poor literacy skills and 22 per cent have poor numeracy skills. It has a diverse community with 22 per cent of residents from minority ethnic groups, compared with a national average of 9.1 per cent. English is an additional language for 36 per cent of primary school pupils. Seventeen per cent of the population are aged over 60 years and 5.3 per cent have a disability.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Leadership and management and the arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. The arrangements for equality of opportunity are good. The provision is satisfactory in information and communications technology (ICT), leisure, travel and tourism, arts, media and publishing, languages, literature and culture and in preparation for life and work.

4. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is well-established and effective. The views of staff and learners are incorporated and new strengths and weaknesses have been identified each year. The self-assessment report identifies strengths, but it did not identify some of the key weaknesses. Development plans are reviewed, updated regularly and indicate an increasing focus on using a range of performance indicators to improve the quality of

provision.

5. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.

The leadership of the service effectively supports the significant cultural shift which is taking place across the service. It has recognised the need to restructure and there is a good focus on the development of a performance culture. Key performance indicators have been introduced to raise achievement and standards. Quality improvement strategies are satisfactory and there are sound systems to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, there are different levels of understanding about the use of performance indicators. Staff recognise the need to develop in this area to drive forward improvement.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM LEA:

- further improve standards of teaching and learning
- improve monitoring and assessment of progress and achievement
- improve confidence of staff to use data effectively
- further develop and promote progression opportunities
- further develop performance management to raise standards
- improve literacy and numeracy provision
- improve provision of literacy, numeracy and language support where appropriate
- improve the sharing of good practice

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Information and communications technology			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>ICT for users</i>		3	
Adult and community learning	458	3	

Leisure, travel and tourism			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i>		3	
Adult and community learning	858	3	

Arts, media and publishing		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Dance Adult and community learning	138	3
Music Adult and community learning	60	3
Fine arts Adult and community learning	238	3
Crafts Adult and community learning	681	3
Media and communication Adult and community learning	70	3

Languages, literature and culture		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other languages, literature and culture Adult and community learning	1,602	3 3

Preparation for life and work		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL Adult and community learning	419	3
Literacy and numeracy Adult and community learning	313	4
Independent living and leisure skills Adult and community learning	100	3

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. Sixteen inspectors spent 80 days inspecting and grading five areas of learning. There were not enough learners in health, public services and care, science and mathematics, agriculture, horticulture and animal care, engineering and manufacturing technologies, retail and commercial enterprise, history, philosophy and theology, social sciences, education and training, business administration and law and community development for these areas to be inspected and graded separately. The inspection team also reported on all aspects of leadership and management.

Number of inspectors	16
Number of inspection days	80
Number of learners interviewed	533
Number of staff interviewed	151
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	10
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	6

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. **Learners in sport, leisure and recreation gain good skills and significant health benefits** from attending classes. Learners are able to accurately identify the intensity at which they work in relation to their own levels of ability and many learners gain skills to benefit their everyday lives. Levels of mobility, co-ordination, flexibility and improved mental agility improve after attending classes. Learners also improve their self-confidence.
8. **Learners' achievements in art and crafts and performing arts are celebrated.** The good promotion of learners' achievements motivates and inspires learners and attracts new learners into provision. Learners perform their work in public and work is entered for local and national competitions. Learners in dance and some craft areas produce high-quality and well-crafted work.
9. **Achievement rates are good on the small number of accredited courses in languages,** although most learners choose not to enter for the qualification.
10. **Language learners communicate effectively** in controlled situations and there is particularly good fluency in level 3 classes. Overall, the standard of learners' work is satisfactory.
11. **Retention rates are good on courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.** Learners develop good social and personal skills. Learners who have complex and diverse needs become more independent and self-aware, and learn to participate in groups.

12. Achievement rates are satisfactory on courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses and on programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, **achievement rates for literacy and numeracy are poor.**

13. Standards of work across the preparation for life and work programme are satisfactory. However, some learners are not set sufficiently challenging tasks, while others are set tasks that are too demanding.

14. **Attendance is poor in sports, leisure and recreation, and literacy and numeracy classes.** Although there are systems in place to follow up non-attendance, these are not used effectively. In sports, leisure and recreation courses, many learners had never attended the classes they had signed up for. Overall attendance rates are satisfactory, although there was some poor attendance during the inspection.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Information and communications technology	1	2	6	2	11
Leisure, travel and tourism	0	9	7	2	18
Arts, media and publishing	4	10	11	3	28
Languages, literature and culture	2	8	9	4	23
Preparation for life and work	0	9	21	2	32
Total	7	38	54	13	112

15. Overall, 40 per cent of the teaching and learning sessions observed by inspectors were judged to be good or better, 48 per cent were satisfactory and 12 per cent were unsatisfactory.

16. **Support for learners with sensory needs is particularly effective in ICT classes.** The service provides supportive learning environments and learners are able to participate in lessons and make good progress.

17. **In sports, leisure and recreation, there are good initiatives to attract older learners.** Effective links with the council's sports development team and local colleges avoid duplication in provision and promotes collaborative planning of new provision. Sessions are held at times which are appropriate for older learners, with 89 per cent of courses held before 6pm. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. In many sessions, learning is extended to include additional information about diet and nutrition. There is a good range of equipment to enhance learning.

18. **Good use is made of staff with current professional experience to enrich learning in arts, media and publishing.** A number of part-time tutors provide a professional context for teaching and learning and their expertise supports creativity and informs learners about contemporary practice.

19. **Good, well-equipped and well-managed studios and workshops enhance teaching and learning in art, crafts and performing arts.** These motivate learners and tutors and provide a good professional context for learning. In the best lessons, learners refer to their notebooks and diaries to support learning. In weaker lessons, critical feedback for tutors is

insufficient and few opportunities are made to share successes with the whole group.

20. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory in language classes. Course and lesson planning is good and there is effective use of the target language. Classes at all levels benefit from the linguistic and cultural knowledge of tutors who are native speakers. The use of the target language is particularly good in British Sign Language (BSL) classes.

21. **In ESOL classes, there is good feedback and modelling of language to improve pronunciation, intonation and sentence structure.** Particularly relevant learning materials are used in ESOL and literacy classes which relate well to learners' lives and ambitions.

22. Information, advice and guidance is satisfactory. There is a wide range of clear and sufficiently detailed information and staff provide good support for learners. However, the provision of assessment and support for literacy, numeracy and/or language is insufficient. In many classes, learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are not formally identified.

23. **Literacy and numeracy provision is weak.** In some classes, tutors are not skilled enough to meet the needs of the many ESOL learners who attend. In numeracy classes there is insufficient guidance by tutors and over dependence on textbooks.

24. **Assessment of progress and achievement is insufficiently rigorous in all areas of learning.** Initial assessment is not adequately recorded in lesson planning and the formulation of individual learning plans. In some areas, individual learning goals are rarely identified and there are inconsistencies in the completion of assessments. Although there are some very good examples of individual planning of learning, such as in dance, this practice is not shared. Generally, individual learning plans are generic and not always sympathetic to the needs of different areas of learning. This weakness has been recognised by the provider.

Leadership and management

25. **There is a strong alignment of the service with the council's lifelong learning strategy.** The council has invested in high-quality, well-staffed centres across the borough to provide adult education alongside a range of other community services. These developments reflect a co-ordinated approach which supports regeneration activities and provides a coherent range of education and training across the borough.

26. **Good leadership of the service effectively promotes the council's social inclusion agenda.** There is also a strong ethos of adult education which supports learners' personal and cultural aims.

27. **There has been a good focus on the development of a performance culture to raise achievement and standards.** Also to help the council respond effectively to local and national initiatives and the effect of funding changes. Key performance indicators are increasingly used. However, there are different levels of understanding among staff about how to use these to drive forward improvements.

28. **There is a strong inclusive ethos across the service.** Adult education centres are welcoming and staff respond well to the needs of learners. Creche facilities are available

for learners. Marketing strategies promote an inclusive learning programme. The council's promotion of equality and diversity is effective and well understood by learners and staff. The learner and staff profile within the adult education service is a very good reflection of the local population.

29. There is good collaboration and work with community groups to widen participation. New groups of learners who are traditionally hard to reach are well supported. A programme of community development activities is creating a range of funding sources.

30. Staff development and appraisal are satisfactory. Annual appraisals monitor performance, identify training needs and set targets. Records are thorough. However, appraisals do not include sufficient evaluation of the key performance indicators. Communications are frequent and regular between staff at all levels and working relationships are particularly good. Staff benefit from a broad range of staff development opportunities, although there is insufficient evaluation of the effectiveness of training.

31. The management and deployment of resources is satisfactory. Accommodation is good and staff are suitably qualified and experienced. The management of devolved budgets is closely and regularly monitored. However, there are some small classes and attendance is poor in some areas of the curriculum.

32. Curriculum management is satisfactory for all areas of learning. Staff are well supported, well informed and the course review process supports course planning and quality improvement. The service has yet to develop an adequate range of progression opportunities and increase the number of courses which lead to qualifications. There are variations in arrangements for initial assessment and insufficient support for literacy, numeracy and language. There are a small number of initiatives to integrate literacy and numeracy within the curriculum. The service has yet to develop an action plan for skills for life, the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, to reflect the borough's strategy.

33. The planning of literacy and numeracy provision does not meet the needs of learners within the borough. Current provision is largely focused on supporting ESOL learners. There is insufficient provision for the high number of learners who have literacy and numeracy needs, nor are there strategies to attract and engage new learners.

34. There is insufficient recording of progress and achievement. Individual learning plans are in place for most courses, but these are not always used appropriately to record progress and achievement.

35. Quality improvement practices are satisfactory. There is a wide range of clearly written policies, procedures and handbooks which set out standards and behaviour that the service expects from staff and learners.

36. There is a well-established system for observation of teaching and learning. Action plans are used to deal with issues identified during observation. Although the system has been particularly effective in raising standards in languages, generally, records of observations are too descriptive. There is no system to formally check the quality of observations, the accuracy of judgements and the consistency of grading.

37. **Course files provide an effective framework for course development.** Until recently, there has been insufficient checking of the quality of these files. There are insufficient mechanisms to share good practice.

38. **The views of learners are collected and the service reacts promptly to feedback.** The prospectus was completely re-designed in 2004-05 in response to learners' views. However, some questionnaires are not appropriate for learners with literacy and/or languages needs.

39. **There is insufficient use of management information.** A range of data is collected to support quality improvement. Targets are set for curriculum areas, but most of the staff have a poor understanding of these targets. In some cases, the presentation of data does not allow clear judgements to be made. Most staff are not adequately aware of the data in their area and how to use it to raise standards.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- strong alignment of service with the council's lifelong learning strategy
- good leadership of the service
- good collaboration and work with community groups to widen participation
- strong inclusive ethos across the service

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of progress and achievement
- insufficient use of management information to raise standards

Information and communications technology

ICT for users

Strengths

- good support for learners with sensory needs
- particularly effective use of feedback and action-planning to improve provision

Weaknesses

- very low success rates on accredited courses
- insufficient analysis and use of data

Leisure, travel and tourism

Sport, leisure and recreation

Strengths

- good health benefits and development of skills
- good initiatives for older learners
- good range and quality of equipment to enhance learning

Weaknesses

- poor attendance
- inadequate monitoring of learners' progress

Arts, media and publishing

Strengths

- good celebration of learners' achievements
- well-equipped and well-managed studios
- good use of staff with professional experience to enrich the curriculum

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring of learners' progress
- insufficient co-ordination and development of specialist curriculum

Languages, literature and culture

Other languages, literature and culture

Strengths

- good course and lesson planning
- effective use of target language
- effective use of observation of teaching and learning

Weaknesses

- insufficiently rigorous assessment of learning
- poor resources for teaching and learning
- inadequate use of data to improve provision

Preparation for life and work

Strengths

- good retention in classes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- good development of personal and social skills by learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- good feedback and modelling of language in ESOL classes
- particularly relevant materials and activities in ESOL and literacy classes

Weaknesses

- weak literacy and numeracy provision
- insufficient use of initial assessment to plan learning
- inadequate individual target-setting

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM LEA:

- helpful, friendly, supportive and patient tutors
- fees acceptable - good value for money
- being treated as individuals
- good location and times of classes
- free courses and excellent crèche facilities
- lessons which are fun
- being comfortable to make mistakes
- skills, knowledge and confidence gained

WHAT LEARNERS THINK HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM LEA COULD IMPROVE:

- more classes and different levels of courses
- more childcare places
- better equipment and resources
- more use of computers
- better pre-course information
- the recording on individual learning plans
- small grant funds not restricted to learners on benefit
- more lifts to improve access

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- strong alignment of service with the council's lifelong learning strategy
- good leadership of the service
- good collaboration and work with community groups to widen participation
- strong inclusive ethos across the service

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of progress and achievement
- insufficient use of management information to raise standards

40. The alignment of the adult education service with the council's lifelong learning strategy is strong. The service is a part of the council's lifelong learning management structure. There is a strong commitment to the development of an effective service and good support from elected members. The adult learning plan is taken through the scrutiny panel, and other key areas such as the setting of fees also go through this council process. The assistant director for lifelong learning holds frequent and regular meetings with adult education staff and works closely with other council services, to ensure the contribution of adult education to overall council objectives. The council's transitional education plan for 2005-06 identifies the role of the service in lifelong learning. Key council objectives are used in the service's comprehensive business and action plans. The service has responded to the challenges of the Best Value report in 2003, and in particular in increasing participation, partnership work, and improve the quality and efficiency of the service. The service is an active member of a wide range of networks which plan and develop a co-ordinated approach to build capacity and a coherent range of education and training across the borough.

41. The council has invested in, and made good use of, a range of funding sources to provide high-quality, well-staffed centres across the borough. These are used for education provision alongside a range of other community services, including libraries, sport and fitness, early years and family support services. These developments and close work with other council departments support regeneration activities and promote lifelong learning.

42. The leadership of the adult education service is good. The service is well established and has a high profile across the borough. Learner satisfaction rates are very high. There is a strong ethos of adult education which supports the council's social inclusion agenda and economic imperatives, as well as the provision of courses to support learners' personal and cultural aims.

43. The service is effectively publicised and the community support team provides a good range of information, advice and guidance within centres and in a variety of community venues. A clear e-learning strategy has been developed across the service. Most of the key performance indicators show that the service has improved its provision since 2003.

For example, it has reduced the number of class closures significantly.

44. The leadership of the service effectively supports the significant cultural shift which is taking place. The service is working hard to position itself to respond effectively to local and national initiatives and to deal with the effect of funding changes over the next few years. The service has recognised the need to restructure, but this is yet to be completed. Alongside some significant and lengthy staff absences, there are still some ambiguities about roles and responsibilities. There has been a good focus on the development of a performance culture to raise achievement and standards, including the increasing use of key performance indicators. However, there are different levels of understanding about the use of these indicators to drive forward improvement.

45. Communication within the service is satisfactory. There are frequent and regular meetings between all staff at all levels. Minutes of the meetings are clear and identify actions to be taken with allocated responsibilities and target dates. All staff have access to e-mail and a useful and informative intranet system. Working relationships between staff teams and staff and managers are particularly good. The service produces termly newsletters for staff and learners. It uses these effectively to celebrate success and to provide information and news.

46. Staff have an annual appraisal with their line manager which is used to monitor performance, to identify training needs and to set targets for the following year. The recording of the appraisals is thorough and they include a review of previous targets. However, the appraisal does not include sufficient discussion or evaluation of the results of lesson observations or of the key performance indicators. Staff benefit from a broad range of staff development opportunities. All teaching staff are encouraged to achieve level 4 teaching qualifications and all staff receive a subsidy towards adult education courses provided by the service. However, there is insufficient evaluation of the effectiveness of training or the benefit to the individual member and staff and the service.

47. The management and deployment of resources is satisfactory. The service has good accommodation and there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified and appropriately experienced staff to deliver the programmes. Management of devolved budgets is closely and regularly monitored. However, there are some small classes and attendance is poor in some areas of learning.

48. The service has yet to develop an adequate range of progression opportunities and to increase the number of courses leading to qualifications to help learners access further training and employment. The self-assessment recognises that although careful attention is given to the needs of individual learners and support for all learners is good, there are variations in the arrangements for initial assessment, and the provision of support for literacy, numeracy and language is insufficient. The adult service has played an important role in the development of the borough's literacy, numeracy and language strategy. There are a small number of initiatives to integrate literacy and numeracy into the curriculum, but the service has yet to develop an action plan to reflect the borough's strategy.

49. There is insufficient recording of progress and achievement. Although the overall management of curriculum areas is satisfactory, in most areas there are weaknesses in the recording of progress and achievement. Although individual learning plans are in place for most courses, these are not always appropriate and are not used sufficiently to plan

teaching and learning. This weakness was recognised in the self-assessment report.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

50. There is a strong inclusive ethos across the service. The centres are welcoming and comfortable environments and staff respond well to the needs of learners. Learners feel valued as members of the community and they enjoy attending the multi-cultural centres. Learners appreciate the opportunity to choose courses based on their preferences and aims rather than stereotypical placement. For example, a single mother was encouraged to enrol on a woodskills course, an opportunity she was denied as a pupil at school. She is enjoying the course and gaining practical skills while improving her self-confidence.

51. Crèche facilities provide good support for parents who praise the care given to their children. Crèches are provided at four sites and they are staffed by well-qualified early years carers. The carers have recently completed training in speech and language and sign language to enable them to meet the diverse needs of the children. Demand for places in the crèches exceeds capacity. Crèche fees are subsidised, especially for parents attending skills for life and ESOL classes, as part of the council's policy to promote inclusiveness and ensure that learners are not excluded for financial reasons.

52. The council's promotion of equality and diversity is effective and well understood by learners and staff. Policies and procedures for complaints are promoted and information is widely displayed using posters, leaflets and within the learners' handbook. Information is produced in English and the council provides translations of information into any of the community languages used in the borough. The recruitment and selection policy requires information to prospective learners to be provided in at least 10 community languages, and in large print and on tape and disk, if requested. Marketing strategies promote an inclusive learning programme. The tutor's handbook contains comprehensive guidance on the council's expectations for the promotion of equality and diversity. Teaching and support staff have received recent training in equality and diversity, including race relations and implications of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. However, the content of lessons does not sufficiently reflect the diverse environment of the service.

53. There is good collaboration and work with community groups to widen participation. The service's managers meet frequently with representatives of local groups and voluntary sector agencies to explore partnership work, to exchange ideas and information and to share good practice. Representatives of local groups value the importance of these partnerships and their role in targeting hard-to-reach members of the community. For example, the service works with the Iranian Association to make contact with foreign nationals and refugee members of the community and with the 'Better Government Programme' to support the development of courses and activities for older learners. The service is working with partners to increase the number of male learners. For example, work with the Gateway Technology Centre provides skills for life support and as part of its 'Getting Involved' project, the service works to engage disaffected young people.

54. Effective partnership work supports capacity building within voluntary organisations. There is a good focus on providing a programme of community development activities using a range of funding sources. Programmes include accredited training for learning mentors from some of the borough's most deprived communities. Family learning programmes encourage greater involvement in local communities as well providing opportunities to develop skills for life.

55. The service routinely monitors participation of learners by area of learning to measure against targets for recruitment. Data for 2005-06 shows that 29 per cent of its learners are from minority ethnic groups and 6.1 per cent have a disability compared with 22 per cent and 5.3 per cent respectively in the community. Monitoring focuses on participation, and the service has not yet fully developed the analysis of retention and achievement data by different groups of learners. Thirty-five per cent of teaching and support staff and 20 per cent of managers are from minority ethnic groups. The staffing profile reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the local community.

56. Some accommodation is not easily accessible and improvement of access to centres for people with disabilities is identified as a key challenge in the self-assessment report. The learning centres are largely sited in former Victorian-built schools which cannot easily be adapted to give easy access to first-floor rooms. A full accessibility audit and consultation has taken place to devise strategies to improve facilities for people with disabilities. Many improvements have already been made.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

57. The service has a range of clearly written and easy-to-understand policies and procedures for quality assurance. These are available on paper and through the staff intranet. A systems and procedures group meets monthly to review and update the policies as appropriate. Most policies and procedures are now dated to show when they should be formally reviewed. There are also useful and very well-written handbooks for teaching staff, administration staff, managers and learners. These include information about the quality assurance arrangements and clearly set out the standards and behaviour that the service expects from staff and learners.

58. The quality of teaching is checked through regular classroom observations. Action plans are drawn up to remedy areas for improvement or weaknesses identified during the observation. Staff value the support they receive from observers and recognise how observations of their lessons have helped to develop their teaching skills. The observation of lessons has been particularly successful in improving the standard of teaching in languages. However, in other curriculum areas, too often the records of observations are only descriptions of what the teacher did during the lesson. Insufficient emphasis is paid to evaluating the quality of the teaching or the learning. Often the information recorded does not support the grade given to the lesson. As yet the service has not identified criteria which might help observers evaluate lessons effectively, although all staff have received training in carrying out observations. There is no system to formally check the quality of the observations and the accuracy of the judgements or to ensure the consistency of grading across the curriculum areas.

59. Staff are required to complete a file for each programme which contains programme information, a scheme of work, lesson plans and individual learning plans for each of the learners. Until very recently there has been insufficient checking of the quality of these documents. Course files for the autumn term of 2005-06 have recently been audited. However, as yet the audit is not complete and it is too early to judge what effect this formal audit will have on the quality of teaching and learning. The service has not yet devised effective mechanisms to identify and share good practice.

60. The service values the feedback it collects from learners and reacts promptly to

concerns raised. For example, the prospectus was completely re-designed in response to learners' views and the 2004-05 prospectus won a national award for the best adult education prospectus in the country. Feedback is collected by evaluations at the end of each course, by questionnaires and from focus groups. However, the questionnaires are not appropriate for learners on ESOL or literacy courses or for those with learning difficulties or disabilities. As the questionnaires are sent out at the same time each year it is sometimes too early in the learners' course for them to be able to answer the questions meaningfully. The service collects feedback from course evaluations which are completed by learners and tutors. However, the information gathered does not effectively identify strengths or areas for improvement in teaching and learning.

61. There is insufficient use of management information to improve quality. The service uses data to monitor a number of key performance indicators including retention, achievement and attendance. It sets each curriculum area targets and regularly reports on them. However most staff have a poor understanding of these targets. Some staff are not clear about how achievement rates for accredited courses are calculated and in some cases, the way the data is presented does not allow clear judgements to be made. During the inspection, curriculum managers were not able to easily identify the number of learners currently on courses.

62. The service produced its fourth self-assessment report for 2004-05. The self-assessment process is well established and effective. The service includes the views of all staff and learners. New strengths and weaknesses have been identified each year and the development plans are reviewed and updated regularly. The final report is broadly accurate in identifying the services' strengths. However, it did not identify some of the key weaknesses found during inspection. In ICT, the service has used development plans effectively to improve the quality of the provision.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information and communications technology

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ICT for users</i> Adult and community learning	458	3 3

63. ICT programmes include traditional office-based software courses at entry level to level 2, digital photography and web-design courses. There is specific provision for learners who use BSL, for learners with learning difficulties and for target groups including women and older learners. Approximately 44 per cent of the courses are accredited.

64. Courses range in length from five to 10 weeks, generally for two hours each week and they run during the day and evening, with some weekend provision. They are held in five of the council's main centres.

65. In 2004-05 there were 771 learners enrolled on ICT courses. Twenty-nine per cent were men, 19 per cent were over 60, and 29 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. In the current year, 458 learners have enrolled on 56 courses. There are 18 part-time tutors and the area is currently managed by an acting curriculum manager and a lecturer in charge.

ICT for users

Strengths

- good support for learners with sensory needs
- particularly effective use of feedback and action-planning to improve provision

Weaknesses

- very low success rates on accredited courses
- insufficient analysis and use of data

Achievement and standards

66. Success rates on accredited programmes are very low and in 2004-05, the rates were 23 per cent. Many learners choose not to complete the final assessment for accreditation although they complete their course. For example, of the 449 learners who enrolled on accredited programmes in 2004-05, only 131 learners chose to enter for accreditation. The achievement rate was 79 per cent. Achievement rates on non-accredited programmes are satisfactory at 83 per cent. In 2004-05 retention rates were 78 per cent.

67. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. On introductory programmes, learners quickly learn basic operation of the computer, mouse and keyboard and go on to use a word processor and the internet. New classes enable learners to design and produce material in a variety of photographic, paper-based and web-based media.

68. During the inspection, attendance was 79 per cent and overall attendance is satisfactory at just below 90 per cent. There is a good system to follow up unexplained absences although this has yet to be extended to include evaluation of why learners drop out of programmes early.

The quality of provision

69. Support for learners with sensory needs is good. Tutors are sensitive to learners' complex needs, provide supportive learning environments and learners make good progress. Hearing loops are readily available and are regularly used to help learners with hearing loss to participate actively in lessons. Tutors adjust the configuration of the computer to enlarge icons for learners with visual impairment. Specialist software and a Braille printer are available for learners who are blind.

70. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Programmes and sessions are generally detailed and well planned. Tutors routinely set lesson objectives at the start of the session. In the best sessions, a wide range of assessment methods are shared with learners and promote active learning. However, only 27 per cent of lessons observed were good or better. Many lessons do not take sufficient account of learners' individual needs and interests. Learners have standardised individual learning plans which list all the learning outcomes for the course. Learners assess themselves against the plans at the start of the course, the mid-point and at the end. Although learning plans include opportunities for tutor assessment, many of these sections are not completed. Most courses have appropriate paper-based resources, but some tutors do not use appropriate fonts in their handouts. The interactive whiteboard at one of the centres is placed too high on the wall. Learners' desks are often too small for the learners to have a worksheet open on the desk beside their keyboard and mouse.

71. There is a satisfactory range of programmes at different levels for a diverse group of learners. Initiatives to widen participation include drop-in sessions in local public libraries. These attract learners who are unwilling to attend a main centre or to commit to regular attendance at a class. The drop-in hours at the media café are well used by learners who do not have their own computers at home. The manager of the media café is also an ICT tutor and provides good support for learners. Information, advice and guidance is generally satisfactory but some learners are on courses at an inappropriate level.

72. There is no systematic identification of learners who would benefit from support for their literacy, numeracy or language needs, other than self-declaration by the learner. Individual learning plans do not include a specific section for recording additional learning needs. Tutors are aware of the systems for obtaining support and informally assess and refer learners for additional support. A range of adaptive technology such as large-key keyboards and tracker balls is available. However, there is no up-to-date list for tutors of what is available.

Leadership and management

73. Feedback provided through the self-assessment process is well used to devise the action plan to improve the provision. A good range of feedback is collected including learner satisfaction surveys, tutor course evaluations and observations of teaching and learning. The action plan contains specific, measurable targets with suitably challenging

dates for completion. Following a period during which the post was vacant, the present curriculum manager used the action plan as a working document to improve the provision. At the time of inspection, most actions have been started and many have been completed.

74. There is good and frequent communication between the curriculum manager and tutors, and regular team meetings are held. The service's recently acquired e-learning system has the facility for inter-staff communication, but its use is at an early stage of development. Observations of teaching and learning are used for staff development and action plans, but reports include insufficient reference to learning.

75. The resources for learning are satisfactory. ICT hardware and software is up to date. The network used by learners and tutors is reliable and the internet connection is fast. Software configuration of the learners' computers is not locked which helps learners to practise changes in configuration. However, this means that individual computers in a suite may be configured in different ways and this makes it difficult for tutors to refer learners to a specific feature. There is no easy way of resetting the configuration back to a standard baseline. Not all computer rooms are accessible for learners with restricted mobility.

76. Tutors have appropriate levels of skills and some are working towards teaching qualifications. Tutors are a good role model for learners. Many are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and two have a disability.

77. Data is insufficiently analysed and used to monitor performance. There are inconsistencies in data and targets, for example for recruitment and targets are not recognised by staff, nor are they used for planning. Achievement data is not routinely analysed to monitor the performance of different groups of learners. Data is not available for the curriculum manager about numbers of learners accessing support for additional needs. Data about cancellation of courses is not analysed and too many of the planned courses are cancelled. Although cancellation rates are improving, in 2004-05, 22 per cent of the non-accredited programme was cancelled.

Leisure, travel and tourism**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i>		3
Adult and community learning	858	3

78. Sport, leisure and recreation courses are offered in 17 venues across the borough. At the time of inspection there were 68 courses including non-accredited courses in yoga, Tai Chi, fitness, country rambles, bridge and Pilates. Four accredited courses are available in day skipper, community sports leader awards, samskara bodywork and sports science. Some courses are provided for specific groups, for example women-only courses and programmes for the over 50s. Courses run for between 10 and 33 weeks and sessions last from one to two hours. Just over half of the provision is offered during the day and the rest are in the early evening. In 2004-05, there were 2,990 enrolments and 1,071 learners. Of these 14.3 per cent were men, 48.3 per cent were over the age of 60 and 21.3 per cent were from a minority ethnic group. At the time of inspection there are 858 learners and 1,404 enrolments. The area is managed by a curriculum manager and there are 30 part-time tutors.

Sport, leisure and recreation*Strengths*

- good health benefits and development of skills
- good initiatives for older learners
- good range and quality of equipment to enhance learning

Weaknesses

- poor attendance
- inadequate monitoring of learners' progress

Achievement and standards

79. Learners achieve good health benefits and develop good skills. In yoga and Pilates, learners demonstrate a good understanding of correct body alignment. In chi kung, learners demonstrate good independent knowledge of postures and can effectively perform movements and sequences. Learners accurately identify the intensity at which they work in relation to their own level of ability. In yoga, learners have developed the necessary focus and concentration needed to perform at a high standard. Learners have gained the necessary skills to use what is learnt in class to benefit their everyday lives. In chi ball, learners use specific exercises performed in class to aid recovery from joint problems, and aches and pains. Significant lifestyle changes have been made by learners who were referred to the sports courses by cardiac rehabilitation teams. Learners report improvements to mobility, co-ordination, balance, flexibility, posture, wellbeing and improved mental agility after attending sessions. In many sessions, learners benefit from the social aspect of attending courses and have increased their confidence and self-esteem.

80. Attendance is poor at 64 per cent during inspection. Although there is a system in place for following up non-attendance, this is not used effectively. In a sample of courses at one centre, 65 per cent of courses had an attendance rate below 70 per cent. Learners had not attended many of these sessions.

The quality of provision

81. There are good initiatives to attract older learners. The 'agewell' programme provides opportunities for productive, collaborative work with partner organisations to attract and meet the needs of older learners. The programme is highly valued by learners who are closely involved in the planning of the curriculum. Effective links have been established with hospital and community-based rehabilitation services to refer learners who would not otherwise participate in active recreation. These include cardiac rehabilitation teams and falls prevention units.

82. Effective links with the council's sports development team and local colleges avoids duplication in provision and promotes collaborative planning of new provision. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better sessions, learners receive good individual support and performance is carefully monitored and corrected to ensure effective and safe participation. There is good use of questioning to check learning and to engage learners. Tutors encourage independent learning and there is a good range of activities to meet individual and course objectives. In some sessions, learning is extended through additional information about meridians, diet, nutrition and muscle groups. In weaker sessions, activities are insufficiently adapted to meet individual needs, there is inadequate monitoring of learners' performance and tutors do not offer sufficient individual support to help learners improve.

83. The range of programmes is satisfactory and there are some good initiatives to widen participation. Sessions are held at times appropriate for older learners with 89 per cent being held before 6pm. There is an adequate spread of courses across the borough. Sessions are held in a variety of venues across the borough including adult education and community centres.

84. Information, advice, guidance and support for learners is satisfactory. Learners receive adequate pre-course information before enrolment. Pre-course information is easy to access through the adult education service website or telephone, and learners find the information useful. In some cases, learners have the opportunity to talk to the tutor before enrolment. Course information sheets have been produced for most courses. In some sessions, there is insufficient guidance and information for learners about progression opportunities.

85. The monitoring of learners' progress is inadequate. Initial assessment is weak and fitness levels, mobility and flexibility, against which progress can be measured, is rarely identified. In courses where this information is available, it is not used in session planning or to review progress and achievement. Progress is rarely measured against individual goals and arrangements for literacy and language support are not formally identified when appropriate. There is some resistance to the monitoring of learners' progress by tutors. Many learners and tutors see little value in completing individual learning plans and either complete them superficially or not at all. However, many tutors do give informal feedback in sessions.

Leadership and management

86. There is a good range of equipment to enhance learning. The adult education service provides a good variety of equipment such as mats, blocks, hand weights, belts, bands and gym equipment. The equipment is of a good standard and is provided in all sessions. Learners in mixed-ability classes are able to progress at an appropriate level with the use of different weights or different levels of band resistance. The equipment enhances learners' experience. For example, in Pilates, tutors make good use of the mirrors to help learners' understand and achieve correct body positioning. Tutors are provided with music systems that are used appropriately to create atmosphere, aid co-ordination and motivate the learners.

87. Accommodation is satisfactory in terms of size, appropriateness, acoustics and cleanliness. Some courses are run in purpose-built sports centres or old community buildings that have been renovated, and provide a good standard of accommodation. However, there are a small number of venues that are too small for the number of learners or are difficult to access for learners with restricted mobility.

88. Co-ordination of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Tutors feel supported and well informed. Regular contact is maintained with tutors who are unable to attend meetings. The course review process supports course planning and quality improvement. However, tutors do not all complete these evaluations and the learner survey only captures the views of learners enrolled in the summer term. Although data is used to evaluate provision there is insufficient analysis of individual courses to identify trends over time. Observation of teaching and learning is well established, tutors are observed every year, and identified actions for improvement are followed up. Tutors report that their sessions have improved after observations, although in some cases insufficient feedback is given to tutors. Tutors are appropriately qualified in their occupational area and many maintain and broaden their occupational competence. Some have a teaching qualification.

89. Safe working practices are not adequately enforced throughout the service. There is inconsistent use of health screening questionnaires. In one session observed they were not used at all and in others they are not completed for all learners. In some cases tutors are insufficiently aware of the medical constraints of learners in sessions. Risk assessments for the activity taking place are rarely carried out. Self-assessment identifies many of the weaknesses identified during inspection, although many of the strengths identified are no more than normal practice.

Arts, media and publishing**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Dance Adult and community learning	138	3
Music Adult and community learning	60	3
Fine arts Adult and community learning	238	3
Crafts Adult and community learning	681	3
Media and communication Adult and community learning	70	3

90. The council offers courses in art and crafts, performing arts, and media and journalism. Courses include painting, drawing, watercolour and sculpture, upholstery, woodwork, cabinet making and furniture restoration, pottery, stained glass, jewellery and metalwork, dressmaking and needlecraft, computing photo editing, photography and illustration, music including guitar, singing, gospel, dance including ballroom, salsa and ballet, Amici dance and drama.

91. At the time of inspection there were approximately 1,187 learners. Of these, 83 are on accredited programmes, 32 of whom are men. On non-accredited programmes, 218 of the learners are men.

92. Courses are at beginners, intermediate and advanced levels and there are a number of courses at all levels. Classes take place in six main centres and a number of classes take place at the Lyric Theatre. In art there is one accredited course, 'access to art and design', currently in its first year. In craft, courses include sewing, dressmaking, soft furnishing, upholstery, cabinet making and picture framing. All other programmes are non-accredited and run for two or two and a half hours a week for 10 weeks. There are a few one-year programmes in art and music. Learners can attend during the day, evening and at weekends.

93. Currently there is a vacancy for the curriculum manager post for visual and performing arts. There is a dedicated curriculum manager for crafts and motor vehicles and a full-time tutor in arts and one in crafts. In art and performing arts, there are 34 hourly paid tutors and in crafts there are 22.

Strengths

- good celebration of learners' achievements
- well-equipped and well-managed studios
- good use of staff with professional experience to enrich the curriculum

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring of learners' progress

- insufficient co-ordination and development of specialist curriculum

Achievement and standards

94. There is good celebration of learners' achievement. This motivates and inspires learners and promotes courses to new learners. Learners' work is displayed at many centres. There are exhibitions of drawing, painting, ceramics and upholstery which are open to the public and celebrate learners' achievements. Some learners display and sell their work at other public venues. Learners in dance and singing perform their work in public. Learners' work is entered for local and national competitions, such as a well-known museum competition called 'inspired by'.

95. Some learners in dance, art and some craft areas, produce high-quality and well-crafted work. The use of notebooks and diaries underpins these high standards. In most classes the work is of a satisfactory standard, although the development of design skills is not apparent in many classes. In a few classes, beginners struggle and more advanced learners are not set challenging targets by tutors.

96. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory. Attendance rates for accredited provision are good, although during the inspection the overall attendance rate was 72 per cent.

The quality of provision

97. There is good use of staff with current professional experience to enrich learning. A number of part-time tutors are engaged in relevant professional activities. These provide an professional context to the teaching and learning in areas including fine art, illustration, upholstery, jewellery and dance. The expertise of practising artists aids the creative process and informs learners about contemporary practice. For example, in a life drawing class taught by a professional artist, learners work in a wide range of non-conventional ways exploring concepts of scale and mark-making. This includes them holding the brush with different hands and with their mouth, adopting the same pose as the model to understand it more thoroughly and making joint drawings in partnership with other learners. The drawings are the bi-product of the learning, rather than the object of it. The atmosphere is highly focused. The tutor, the learners and the model are working as creative partners in learning. The quality of learning is extremely high.

98. In an introductory illustration class, the tutor is a practising professional. Learners value the insight they gain into the industry and the fact that they look at and discuss not only finished illustrations, but also examples of the tutor's work at different stages of development. In an upholstery lesson, the tutor has a business and works with several designers in London. This experience brings an energy to the class.

99. There are good, well-equipped and managed studios and workshops for teaching and learning. The art studios are good. There are also well designed, well equipped and maintained craft studios and workshops, including woodwork, upholstery, ceramics and jewellery. There has been significant investment in new equipment, including pottery kilns, jewellery equipment and ventilation systems. There are some good studios for dance. These high standards of accommodation motivate learners and tutors, and provide a good professional context for learning.

100. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best sessions have schemes of work and lesson plans with clear sequential skills building over the course. They use a variety of teaching strategies and set challenging targets for the learner. Learners refer to their notebooks and diaries to support learning and the creative process. Individual learning plans are well used in dance. In one dance class, there were three learning outcomes for the mixed abilities of learners. The learning from previous sessions was checked and reinforced and the dancing skills of each learner progressed through practise and understanding. A learner in beginners' drawing class is delighted by how she is seeing things in a new way and feels that she now has a permission to draw and paint. In a dressmaking class, the development of individual practical skills included a group discussion of the problems encountered and possible solutions.

101. In weaker sessions, teaching is dull and uninspiring. Sessions do not have a dynamic start, learning outcomes are not shared and learners do not set their own short-term targets. Sessions lack energy and pace. In one session inexperienced learners were overwhelmed with theory. Where attendance is low there is no strategy to adapt the lesson plan. The more able learners are not sufficiently challenged to extend their skills or evaluate their work. Critical feedback from tutors is insufficient and few opportunities are made to share successes with the whole group.

102. A good range of courses are delivered in six main centres, two community centres and a professional theatre. Course information sheets are good and course promotion on the internet is effective. Progression is possible between courses, but progression routes have yet to be identified. Progression guidance is limited.

103. There is insufficient monitoring of learners' progress. Some initial assessment of individual needs takes place, but the results are not used sufficiently to plan the scheme of work. Support needs for literacy, numeracy and language are not formally identified. Tutors do not give enough guidance to learners on how to record their own learning. There is insufficient recording by learners of their progress either in their portfolios, sketchbooks, notebooks, diaries or individual learning plans. Individual verbal feedback is supportive, but it often lacks critical evaluation and it is not recorded. For learners who choose to follow a longer course, there is no system for monitoring progress between the individual 10-week courses. The service has recognised the need to produce a system for recording learners' progress that is sympathetic to the needs of this specialist area of learning, but as yet this has not been implemented.

Leadership and management

104. Staff feel consulted and well supported. There are regular team meetings and good communication structures are in place. Quality improvement measures are generally well designed and well structured. The course file is well conceived. There is recognition that individual learning plans need adapting for use in specialist curriculum areas. There is very good investment in resources with new purpose-built studios in jewellery and ceramics, and new or reconditioned kilns in ceramics, polishers for jewellery and new ventilation/extraction systems. Areas of learning are well cared for and well maintained and there is good technician support overall.

105. There is insufficient co-ordination and development of the specialist curriculum. The professional expertise of tutors is not shared sufficiently to develop the overall curriculum. Observation of teaching and learning focuses on generic rather than subject-specialist

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judgements. Grading of observations is too high and does not compare well with the inspection profile. While good staff development opportunities are offered, particularly in teacher training and implementation of quality systems, there is insufficient focus on development and updating of subject-specialist knowledge. There is some inadequate management of classes in community venues where there are problems with staff attendance and timekeeping. Learners are not effectively signposted to higher-level courses and often repeat the same course.

Languages, literature and culture**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i> Adult and community learning	1,602	3 3

106. At the time of the inspection there were 63 classes in 10 foreign languages and interpreting, six classes in BSL and one in lip reading. French, Italian and Spanish are offered to level 3. German, Portuguese, Polish and BSL are offered to level 2 and Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Russian at level 1 only. Most courses do not lead to a qualification and run for two hours a week for 10 weeks. There is a small programme of five-week intensive Saturday courses. Learners may prepare for general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) in four languages and for AS and A2 level in 1. Accreditation in BSL is offered at levels 1 and 2. The interpreting courses are accredited at level 4.

107. Seventy per cent of the provision is offered in the evening. Courses take place in six centres across the borough and include adult learning centres and a community venue. In 2004-05 there were 228 learners enrolled on accredited courses and 1,374 enrolled on non-accredited courses. Seven per cent of learners were 60 years of age or older, 69 per cent were women and 19 per cent were from a minority ethnic background. A full-time curriculum manager is responsible for the language programme. There are 30 part-time tutors, one full-time tutor in French and a half-time tutor in interpreting.

Other languages, literature and culture*Strengths*

- good course and lesson planning
- effective use of target language
- effective use of observation of teaching and learning

Weaknesses

- insufficiently rigorous assessment of learning
- poor resources for teaching and learning
- inadequate use of data to improve provision

Achievement and standards

108. Achievement rates are good on accredited courses for those who take the exam, but most learners choose not to enter for the qualification. A minority of learners are interested in a wider range of qualifications for modern foreign languages. The service is currently investigating a new system for language accreditation.

109. The achievement rate in BSL at level 1 has been consistently satisfactory over the last three years. However, it was very poor for level 2 in 2004. Of 18 learners who started the course only two achieved the qualification. The system of recording achievement in non-accredited provision is insufficiently rigorous. It is based on overly simplistic individual

learning plans. There is no internal moderation and data in the non-accredited courses are insufficiently reliable to establish trends. Overall rates for retention and attendance are satisfactory, although at the time of inspection, the attendance rate was poor at 64 per cent.

110. Learners communicate effectively in a controlled situation. Listening and speaking skills range from unsatisfactory to very good. There is particularly good fluency in level 3 classes. Writing and reading skills are satisfactory. In languages with non-Roman script, learners have achieved good levels of script recognition, but do not perform as well in the spoken language. Pronunciation and grammatical accuracy is generally good. Most of the learners report that they enjoy their learning.

The quality of provision

111. Course and lesson planning is good. Schemes of work are carefully designed to enable learners to consolidate earlier learning and meet new challenges. Lesson plans in nearly all classes provide evidence of detailed planning and thorough preparation. In a few instances tutors are unclear about what constitutes a measurable learning objective and focus overly on topics. Lesson plans are not always used effectively for post-lesson evaluation and reflection on teaching and learning.

112. There is effective use of the target language. Classes at all levels benefit from the linguistic and cultural knowledge of tutors who are native speakers. Tutors adapt this knowledge appropriately to meet the needs of learners. Instruction, explanation and feedback on performance are routinely given in the target language. Learners are encouraged to use the target language with the tutor and with each other. Most are able to ask for clarification on language points in the target language.

113. Use of the target language is particularly good in BSL classes where learners do not use English at all in lessons, even among themselves.

114. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. In the best classes, learners are challenged and respond well to a brisk pace. Individual needs are met. For example, late starters and slower learners are well catered for and progress is effectively monitored informally with regular checks on learning. Appropriate reinforcement activities take place and assignments are effectively marked. A good variety of activities engage learners and enable them to practise oral and written skills. Learning aids such as visual materials, newspaper articles and games successfully stimulate learning. The weaker classes lack pace and purpose. There is too much use of mechanistic teaching styles and over-prompting of learners. There are insufficient opportunities for learners to use the language and, in some classes, there is a marked absence of language modelling and correction to assist learning. Teaching aids are under-used or not used appropriately and handouts are poor. Classes lack variety and some learners are not fully engaged.

115. Initial, on-course and final assessment of learning is insufficiently rigorous. Learners and tutors express the need for more diagnostic initial assessment to reduce the instances of an unnecessarily wide range of attainment levels in one class. The service is developing a questionnaire for learners to self-assess before enrolment.

116. Individual learning plans allow for individual and group goals, but individual learning goals are rarely identified. Tutors and learners report that the numerical way in which

progress is monitored and recorded is simplistic and ineffective. It does not stimulate dialogue between learners and tutors on progress. Despite these shortcomings, individual learning plans are used as the measure of learning success and the basis of statistics on achievement. A system for internal moderation of learning outcomes is currently under development but it is too early to assess its effect. Individual learning plans are not used to assist course planning and review. In BSL, course assessment is only through visual feedback from the tutor. Individual learning plans are poor and no other form of assessment such as video was observed by inspectors.

117. The range of foreign languages provision is satisfactory. It is responsive to the needs and interests of the local community. Learners are also able to take advantage of relevant cultural and linguistic events in the area to enrich their learning. Progression opportunities are adequate for the more popular languages, but limited for others.

118. In BSL there are no introductory or bridging courses between levels of accreditation to support learning and improve achievement. Learners say they would like the opportunity to follow a non-accredited course.

119. Support for learners, including additional learning support, is satisfactory. Most tutors provide good individual support, including e-mail contact outside class times. Some tutors provide individual additional help to enable learners to maintain progress. There is an adequate system for learners who self-identify a specific support need. In instances of undeclared need, tutors display common sense and sensitivity to integrate learners successfully. While most tutors have received training for implementing the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995, they do not have specific training for the more commonly found support needs, such as hearing impairment and dyslexia. None of the learners observed or interviewed during inspection required literacy, numeracy or language support.

120. Guidance and advice are satisfactory. Course levels are clearly described in the prospectus and additional detailed information on course content is readily available. Responses are quick and effective when learners seek specialist advice and guidance, although most learners are not aware of this opportunity.

Leadership and management

121. Observation of teaching and learning is extensive and effective. Strengths and areas for development are accurately identified, but grades are sometimes over generous. Tutors value the feedback and pursue action plans to good effect. Observation records indicate that standards of teaching and learning are improving. BSL tutors are observed and supported by a manager who is fluent in the subject. The tutors meet regularly to exchange information and have signed support during training events.

122. All teaching staff are native speakers and have good subject knowledge. Most of them have teaching qualifications but these are not always appropriate for adult and community learning. Many tutors have recently completed, or are currently studying for, relevant qualifications.

123. There are poor resources for teaching and learning. The quality of sound production is inadequate on many tape recorders. Few data projectors are available and tutors find it cumbersome to access portable systems. Interactive whiteboards and other ICT-based

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resources are rarely used. Most of the tutors do not use the provider's intranet which contains some links to modern foreign languages and BSL sites, but no actual resources for this area of learning. Tutors report that in some of the teaching centres all types of modern foreign language resources are scarce. Accommodation is satisfactory.

124. There is inadequate use of data to improve provision. The service routinely collects performance indicators and senior managers set targets. However, there is little evidence that curriculum managers use these targets to plan for and improve provision. Some of the findings in the self-assessment report were also identified by inspectors, but strengths have been overstated and some weaknesses were not identified.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL Adult and community learning	419	3
Literacy and numeracy Adult and community learning	313	4
Independent living and leisure skills Adult and community learning	100	3

125. The council provides preparation for life and work courses including provision of ESOL, literacy and numeracy, and courses in independent living and leisure skills. These include provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

126. At the time of inspection, there were 832 learners, of whom 419 are in ESOL, 313 are in literacy and numeracy and 100 learners are working towards independent living and leisure skills. Courses take place on five main sites as well as in community venues. Courses range from pre-entry to level 2 and GCSE classes in mathematics and English. Provision is offered through group teaching, workshops and open learning sessions which are available during the day and evening. Learners are able to take a range of accreditation for literacy, numeracy, communication and vocational aspects of their programme. The three areas are each managed by a curriculum manager and there is a team of 15 full-time and fractional tutors. There are 49 part-time tutors and six learning support assistants.

Strengths

- good retention in classes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- good development of personal and social skills by learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- good feedback and modelling of language in ESOL classes
- particularly relevant materials and activities in ESOL and literacy classes

Weaknesses

- weak literacy and numeracy provision
- insufficient use of initial assessment to plan learning
- inadequate individual target-setting

Achievement and standards

127. Retention rates are good on courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In 2004-05, the retention rate was 95 per cent and is at a similar level in the current year.

128. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop good social and personal skills. The level of participation in class is good. Learners work as part of a group and concentrate well on tasks. Tutors and learning support assistants provide good support and they are sensitive to the complex and diverse needs of learners. They manage

challenging behaviour well when difficulties arise, and learners are encouraged to become more independent. In dance and music sessions, learners visibly develop their confidence. They are able to listen to instructions, interact with others in a group and become more self-aware and emotionally independent.

129. Achievement rates on ESOL programmes are satisfactory at 71 per cent for 2003-04 and rising to 74 per cent for 2004-05. Achievement rates on non-accredited courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory at 93 per cent for 2004-05. In 2004-05 the achievement rate for level 1 literacy and numeracy qualifications was poor, at 30 per cent and 43 per cent respectively. This weakness is recognised in the self-assessment report.

130. The standard of work is satisfactory. In independent living classes, learners work well with others to produce simple meals. In ESOL classes, learners enjoy their lessons and develop good oral communication skills. In reading and writing classes, learners produce well-drafted formal letters and in the skills for life integrated sewing class, learners produce garments for the first time in their life. However, some learners are not set sufficiently challenging tasks, while others are set tasks that are too demanding.

131. Attendance for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and in ESOL provision is satisfactory. Attendance in literacy and numeracy provision is low at 66 per cent for 2004-05. During the inspection, attendance was 61 per cent. Punctuality is poor in ESOL classes and lateness is not challenged consistently. However, crèche opening times make it difficult for some learners to drop off and collect their children and make their way to class on time.

The quality of provision

132. There is good feedback and modelling of language in ESOL classes. Learners receive constant and constructive feedback on their spoken English, including good support to improve pronunciation, intonation and sentence structure. Tutors provide useful models of language which provide opportunities for the learners to improve and develop accurate language skills. There is good use of questioning and reinforcement in ESOL. In courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities there are frequent checks on learning through good use of open questions.

133. In ESOL and literacy classes tutors provide particularly relevant materials and activities which relate well to learners' lives. For example, beginner ESOL learners practise vocabulary and ask questions for shopping. Materials are suitable to meet the aims of learners, for example, to research types of education in Britain. They also learn how to join local libraries and leisure facilities. Activities in ESOL lessons generate many opportunities for meaningful oral communication, and reading and writing activities. In literacy and numeracy classes, materials related to jobs are used to prepare learners for employment.

134. Only 28 per cent of lessons observed were good or better. Satisfactory and weak lessons are dull and lack imagination. The range of teaching techniques is too narrow. There is poor use of audiovisual and ICT resources in teaching sessions. In sessions for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, activities to meet group and individual learning objectives are not well defined.

135. The council offers a range of programmes to meet the needs of learners. Community

venues are close to learners' homes or residential or daycare accommodation. In the provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, risk assessments take place and health and safety aspects are monitored, particularly in cookery and independent living classes. Progression opportunities across the area are satisfactory although there is no formal strategy to promote progression. Some courses, such as sewing and business English, provide progression for literacy, numeracy and ESOL learners. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are able to progress from supported learning classes to personal development classes and other classes in centres such as literacy and pottery. One learner is being supported to become a volunteer and to mentor other learners.

136. Initial advice and guidance and induction are satisfactory. Learners understand the details of their learning programmes and the resources available to them.

137. Literacy and numeracy provision is weak. In some classes tutors are not skilled enough to meet the needs of the many ESOL learners who attend. Courses do not effectively take account of the needs of individuals. In numeracy classes there is too much independent working without appropriate guidance from the tutor. Lessons are not planned and there are limited teaching strategies to support learning. Learners work through textbooks with few or any group activities. Learners do not have textbooks to continue learning at home and only get homework when they ask for it.

138. There is insufficient use of initial assessment to plan learning. The results of information gathered at interviews for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not always used to plan lessons. Some learners who have completed previous courses are not set challenging tasks, and personal and social objectives are not always clearly defined. Lesson plans for literacy, numeracy and ESOL do not identify individual language needs. Lesson plans contain few strategies to meet the diverse needs of individual learners. This particularly affects learners who are in large classes. Lesson evaluation is not used effectively to reflect on learning and to plan future learning.

139. The use of target-setting to plan learning is inadequate across the whole programme. The emphasis is on group rather than individual targets within individual learning plans. Targets do not form a sound basis to review progress. In literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision, general statements from the core curricula are used as targets. These do not adequately reflect the needs individual learners. In most sessions for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, targets are insufficiently broken down into small steps to help learners progress. Progress reviews are appropriate and are effectively used with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Leadership and management

140. Overall management of the curriculum is satisfactory. There are regular meetings and communication between tutors and managers through e-mails, telephone and registers. Most staff are appropriately qualified and they are able to access professional development. Resources for learners are generally satisfactory. Facilities for the cookery class are good with four fully equipped kitchen areas which are suitable for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, tutors demonstrate a good understanding of equal opportunities in their teaching.

141. Many aspects of quality improvement are established. However, observation of

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teaching and learning is not sufficiently effective. Reports focus on teaching rather than learning, and are overly descriptive and insufficiently evaluative. Little action is taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to good or better. There is poor sharing of good practice within and between teams across the programme. The self-assessment report was broadly accurate but did not identify all the weaknesses in the provision.

142. The planning for literacy and numeracy provision does not meet the needs of all groups of learners effectively. Current provision is largely focused on supporting ESOL learners. There is insufficient provision for the high number of learners in the borough who have literacy and numeracy needs, nor are there strategies to attract and engage new learners.

